BRENTANO'S CONTEMPORARY DRAMA SERIES

TARNISH

GILBERT EMERY

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TARNISH

BRENTANO'S CONTEMPORARY DRAMA SERIES

TARNISH

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY

GILBERT EMERY

Pattle, Emery Benesley

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TO

ALAN BIRMINGHAM

TO WHOSE VALUABLE SUGGESTIONS AND SYMPATHETIC CRITICISM THIS PLAY OWES MUCH OF ITS PRESENT FORM

G. E.

"Tarnish" was first produced by John Cromwell, Inc., at the Belmont Theater, New York, on October 1, 1923, with the following cast:

Josephine Lee Tevis.....*Mrs. Russ Whytal*

Mrs. Healy.....*Mrs. Jacques Martin*

Apolline Stutts.....*Marion Lord*

Letitia Tevis.....*Ann Harding*

Emmet Carr.....*Tom Powers*

Adolph Tevis.....*Albert Gran*

Nettie Dark.....*Fania Marinoff*

Aggie.....*Mildred MacLeod*

Direction of John Cromwell

THE CHARACTERS

Adolph Tevis

Josephine Lee Tevis, *His Wife.*

Letitia Lee Tevis, *His daughter.*

Emmet Carr

Apolline Stutts

Mrs. Healy

Aggie

Nettie Dark.

Act I: *The sitting-room of the Tevis flat at 189th Street West.*

Act II: *Nettie Dark's apartment.*

Act III: *The sitting-room of the Tevis flat.*

The entire action of the play takes place in New York, on a New Year's Eve—between five o'clock and midnight.
Time: *The Present.*

TARNISH

ACT ONE.

SCENE: *The sitting-room of the* TEVIS *flat, in an apartment house on* 189*th Street—the seventh floor.*

The room itself is typical of its kind, cheaply made, and cheaply decorated. The paper on the walls is quiet in tone, but the electric-light fixtures—a central chandelier and side brackets—are of a common and vulgar pattern.

The commonplace room gives evidences of being inhabitated by people of good taste—for such indeed are the TEVISES. *The pieces of furniture, shabby and worn, still bear the stamp of refinement and former prosperity. A few pictures of no particular value, but pleasantly decorative, hang on the walls; and there is also a fine, but rather incongruous oil portrait of a handsome gentleman of the '70's—*MRS. TEVIS'S *father—conspicuously on the wall at center back. A door* [*right-back*] *leads to the hall and to a general entrance; another door* [*left-back*] *opens into the bedroom of* MR. *and* MRS. TEVIS. *In the center of the right wall double doors connect the sitting-room with the dining-room, beyond which is the kitchen. The opposite wall has two windows* [*with curtains of light, washable material*] *opening on the street. An electric side-bracket is on the wall between the windows; and another below the double doors.*

The disposition of the furniture is very simple. A comfortable old sofa stands under the portrait. In front of the windows is a largish round table with books, papers,

work-basket, etc., and an electric lamp—with a plain paper shade that might have been made at home. Two worn old arm-chairs are on either side of the table. To the right and left of the sofa are low book-cases, the tops of which bear an ornament or two and some pictures.

Before one case is a chair, while lower down stands a small table, equipped as a writing desk. A small chair stands near it. The floor is not carpeted but there are one or two rugs.

RISE: *At the rise of curtain,* MRS. TEVIS *is discovered sitting in an arm-chair having her tea. The modest tea-tray is placed on a small folding-table at her side. Her sewing lies for the moment neglected.* MRS. TEVIS *is a lady of some 55 years, very worn, and thin, and faded, yet with evidences, still, which suggest rather tragically—or perhaps humorously—what she was: "The beautiful Josephine Lee." Her expression is fretful, dissatisfied, complaining, rather haughty; her face has deep lines of disappointment, disillusion, illness, combined with a kind of long-suffering triumphant virtue. For long ago she made up her mind, whatever happened, to be the impeccable wife and mother.* MRS. TEVIS *is at all events a lady, born and bred to the conventions of a good old New York society, and still clinging tenaciously to them. She is simply dressed in black.*

MRS. HEALEY *enters from the dining-room and puts a plate of gingerbread on the tea-table.* MRS. HEALEY *is a kindly, shrewd old Irish woman who rather reluctantly consents to give a few hours of her time daily to the heavier tasks of the* TEVIS *household. Her opinion of* MR. *and* MRS. TEVIS *is not a high one, but her warm heart has opened to* TISHY.—*She is clad in a short, soiled, blue cotton dress and apron and wears a knitted jacket.*

MRS. TEVIS. I do wish you would learn to knock when you come in, Mrs. Healey. [*Looking drearily at the plate of gingerbread.*] Gingerbread!

MRS. HEALEY. 'Y God, there's no suiting you, is there? I made the little ginger-bread for Miss Tishy, bless her heart!

MRS. TEVIS. Oh!—Of course I prefer sponge cake but —well, I'm sure I hope my daughter will enjoy it.

MRS. HEALEY. I guess Lizzie Healey knows what Miss Tishy likes. It's little enough of fun she gets in this house, I'll say.

MRS. TEVIS [*coldly*]. Fun is scarcely what any of us expect after all our troubles.

MRS. HEALEY. Hm! She's late, Miss Tishy is. Wouldn't you think they'd be letting her off early from the office and this the day before New Year's? The poor, dear girl! Not that you'd ever get a word of complaint out of *her*.

MRS. TEVIS. New Year's! Heavens! [*The door-bell rings.*] That must be Mr. Tevis. Let him in, Mrs. Healey. He went to the bank and he's forgotten his key. [MRS. HEALEY *goes toward the door.*] What a trial that man is! [*Calling.*] Adolph! Adolph! I've been so worried! [MRS. HEALEY *reënters.*] Isn't it Mr. Tevis?

MRS. HEALEY [*with a gesture involving her thumb.*] The lady from upstairs is downstairs.

MRS. TEVIS. Who?

MRS. HEALEY. Her. The one that lives in the flat over you. You know. The bootlegger's wife.

MRS. TEVIS. Mrs. Stutts?—Well, what does she want?

MRS. HEALEY [*contemptuously*]. 'Y God, she's calling on ye.

MRS. TEVIS. Well, why didn't you say she was?

MRS. HEALEY. Are you going to let her in?

MRS. TEVIS. Don't keep her standing there! Heaven knows I have few enough callers—and bring another cup and spoon, please.

MRS. HEALEY. Sure! [*Half to herself as she goes to the hall.*] I'm glad it's not me she's calling on. [*Her*

hand on the door.] Don't let her eat up all the gingerbread on ye. *It's for Miss Tishy.* [*Opening the door and going into the hall. To* Mrs. Stutts.] She's in there having a dish of tea. You can go in if you want to. [*She reënters, puts on more light and goes into the dining-room.*]

[Mrs. Stutts *enters effusively and goes to greet* Mrs. Tevis, *who does not rise.* Mrs. Stutts's *attitude is that of the lesser to the greater, try as she will to maintain an equality and to remember that she "is just as good as anybody else." She is, alas! past forty, inclined to plumpness; considerably "made up"; showily dressed in the extravagance of the latest mode; and with painfully "elegant" manners. A common, vulgar, good-natured creature.*]

Mrs. Stutts [*giving both hands*]. How do you do, Mrs. Tevis! I just said to myself as I was coming up in the elevator: "Now I'm going to stop right off and see that dear Mrs. Tevis," I said. "I'm not going to let the old year end without being neighborly."

Mrs. Tevis [*patronizingly, having greeted her*]. Very kind of you, I'm sure, Mrs. Stutts, to remember a poor, shut-in old lady. Pull up that little chair there, won't you? And let me give you some tea.

Mrs. Stutts [*pulling up the indicated chair to the right of tea-table*]. Aren't you as snug as a bug in a rug, having your little cup of tea, all by your lonesome? It's so *cunning!*

[Mrs. Healey *enters with another cup and spoon in her hand, not on a tray. She pauses a moment, listens to* Mrs. Stutts, *and deposits the cup on the tea-tray.*]

Mrs. Healey. Well, there's your cup.

Mrs. Stutts [*in admiration of the china*]. O the cutie little cup! The cutie little cup!

Mrs. Tevis. The remains of my poor Grandmother's set, given her by the French Government.—Thank you, Mrs. Healey. That will be all.

MRS. HEALEY [*significantly, as she goes out through the dining-room door*]. The little ginger-bread—it's for Miss Tishy!

MRS. TEVIS. *O that woman!* [*with a bitter little laugh*] And to think that I once had two footmen to——

MRS. STUTTS [*fascinatedly*]. Livery?—Short pants? —Legs?

MRS. TEVIS [*importantly*]. They wore the Lee livery. I don't know that I told you, Mrs. Stutts, that before my marriage I was a Lee?

MRS. STUTTS [*flatteringly*]. I guess anybody who ever read the Society Columns knows that.—Mercy, I remember my mother—she was from a very old family, Ma was—I remember her telling we children all about the grand wedding of the "beautiful Josephine Lee."

MRS. TEVIS [*flattered*]. Really? Dear me! My daughter Letitia is like me I sometimes think, poor, dear child. She has the Lee mouth and eyes—my father's mouth and eyes. [*She glances towards the portrait of* MR. LEE.]

MRS. STUTTS [*following the gesture*]. Well, as Ed, my husband, would say, if she isn't the dead-spit of that old gentleman! Of course I mean in a lady-like way. She seems a little reserved, your daughter—meeting her in the hall.

MRS. TEVIS. I hope so.

MRS. STUTTS. Your husband's out, isn't he?

MRS. TEVIS. Mr. Tevis is out—yes—for a little walk. He ought to be in at any moment. And my daughter will be here presently. Of course they forget I am alone, poor me. And with dear Letitia away all day at that dreadful office—working—and Mr. Tevis's health so frail! He's a constant care to me. As I tell Letitia, she's lucky to have a mother who accepts uncomplainingly what Providence has so cruelly put upon us.

MRS. STUTTS [*with false enthusiasm*]. You wonderful woman!

Mrs. Tevis. And since my operation last summer—you knew about my operation, Mrs. Stutts?

Mrs. Stutts. Too terrible for words! I don't know how you stood it.

Mrs. Tevis. But I'm forgetting to give you your tea. My poor little tea-tray! Of course the silver service went, along with everything else.—How do you like it? Strong?

Mrs. Stutts. Yes. As Ed always says, "Apolline, give me strong tea and strong friends."

Mrs. Tevis. And sugar?

Mrs. Stutts. Umn-umn! Kinda 'fraid of getting fat. Your feet hurt so when you get fat. [*Taking the tea.*] I thank you so much indeed, Mrs. Tevis. [*Drinking.*] That's lovely.

Mrs. Tevis. Will you try the ginger-bread?

Mrs. Stutts [*taking a large piece*]. I thank you. Just a bite.—Well, I've been on the go since morning. You don't get out much, do you? [*She eats.*]

Mrs. Tevis. I never go out. I don't even *look* out. What is there to see out there?

Mrs. Stutts. O I don't know—I'd just die if I couldn't mingle. Well, I lunched with some lady-friends at the Palace Hotel, and afterwards they *would* sit around in Peacock Alley——

Mrs. Tevis. *In what?*

Mrs. Stutts. Peacock Alley! Did you ever?—Of course I think it's just too common for words, but you do see some of the—— Well! I think it's awful, the way those women carry on. Girls that one day haven't got more than one pair of—well, you know—to their names and the next you see 'em in sables. As I tell Ed—there's two ways to get a fur coat, and one of 'em is to buy it. But Ed says some women are just like fruit-cake; the more you keep 'em, the better they are.

Mrs. Tevis [*shuddering*]. Mrs. Stutts—— Really!

Mrs. Stutts [*in full swing*]. Why, if you'll believe

me, there's that *manicure* of mine who—well, how that girl manages to——

Mrs. Tevis [*passing the ginger-bread in an attempt to divert her*]. Did you have a pleasant Christmas, Mrs. Stutts?

Mrs. Stutts [*taking more ginger-bread*]. Lovely—just lovely!—As I was saying, that manicure of mine—would you believe me if I told you she calls herself Ant'n'ette Lee-Nawr? French it is—for dark. Ay-ugh! And her name is Nettie Dark. Can you beat it?—Well, this Dark girl, she manicures when she hasn't got anything better to do—or worse. She's been around to me lately pretty steady—— [*Regards her nails.*] I kinda like a high polish, don't you?—so I guess she's hard up for a man. My, isn't it awful! [*Drinking her tea.*]

Mrs. Tevis [*still trying to stem the tide*]. I don't know what the world is coming to!—Let me give you some tea, Mrs. Stutts.

Mrs. Stutts. No, thank you! That cup was lovely.—Kinda saving up for my cocktail when Ed comes.—Well, she's a fast one, that Dark girl is——

[Mrs. Healey *appears, dressed for the street in an old black dolman; a little black velvet hat, with a rakish feather, is cocked on her head.*]

Mrs. Healey. It's five and after. Me time is up. I'm going.

Mrs. Tevis [*coldly*]. Very well, Mrs. Healey. And I'm sure I hope you'll have a Happy New Year.

Mrs. Healey. 'Y God! Me?—The same to you, if you feel like it—— [*Whispering.*] Could you be givin' me me pay?

Mrs. Tevis [*embarrassedly*]. Oh! I'm sorry, Mrs. Healey—I—if you could wait until my daughter comes in, she will—ah—— Or you might come in to-morrow, if you——

Mrs. Healey [*comprehending*]. Oh!—Well, the next two days being holidays, I'm going to bed. Me leg's that

swelled. [*Collecting in a paper bag most of the gingerbread that is left, and giving sharp looks at* Mrs. Stutts, *as she does so.*]

Mrs. Tevis [*to* Mrs. Healey, *angrily*]. What *are* you doing?

Mrs. Healey [*composedly*]. I'm saving a piece of the ginger-bread for Miss Tishy.—You can tell Miss Tishy I wish *her* a Happy New Year, God bless 'er!—Good-evening to you. [*She goes into the dining-room.*]

Mrs. Tevis [*in exasperation*]. *Oh! Oh!*

Mrs. Stutts. Isn't she the card?—I guess she kinda likes your daughter.—I sorta hoped Mr. Tevis would be in—he's always so kinda chatty—'specially when you meet him in the elevator—or the *lift*, as the English say.

Mrs. Tevis [*coldly*]. Oh?

Mrs. Stutts [*vivaciously*]. Oh, yes, indeed! He's got a way with him, he has.—I told Ed last night, I said, "I'm going to give poor Mr. Tevis a bottle of that port wine for New Year's. What's the use," I said, "of being a 'boot-legger's bride,' " I said, "if you can't give a bottle of something once in a while to a neighbor?"

Mrs. Tevis [*in a very chilly voice*]. Really, Mrs. Stutts, you're very kind, but we couldn't possibly accept——

Mrs. Stutts [*interrupting*]. My goodness *me!* I guess it'll kind of jazz poor Mr. Tevis up. I guess sometimes he gets kinda—— [*She gestures vaguely.*] They all do. You know how men are.

Mrs. Tevis [*freezingly*]. I know how Mr. Tevis is, certainly.

Mrs. Stutts. I s'pose so—still—— Mercy, my first husband had nervous prostration *twice* the first year we were married—but that man, prostration or no prostration—— Well, finally, I had to leave him, that's all. Oh, men are men! Sick or well they're all alike, I say. But we hang onto 'em, don't we? By the last rag of the bed-clothes! [*She laughs heartily.*]

MRS. TEVIS [*horrified*]. Mrs. Stutts——!

MRS. STUTTS. O Mercy! I don't mean that Mr. Tevis is—— O dear *no!* He's an old sweetie, and you tell him I said so. [*Rising.*] Heavens, it's nearly six! Ed'll think I've eloped!—I see by the paper that that rich Mrs. Canby—isn't she a relation of yours, Mrs. Tevis?

MRS. TEVIS. The Canbys are cousins of ours. Unfortunately, family differences between us have——

MRS. STUTTS. You don't say so? [*She sits* again.] Anyhow, the paper says—I suppose you've heard it—that she's run off.—Isn't it awful?—Run off with one of those little dancing-boys that——

MRS. TEVIS [*astounded*]. *Ella? Ella Canby?* At her age! Oh!

MRS. STUTTS. Ay-ugh! Run off with a professional dancer from the Jardin dee Jo-ie, no older than twenty-three—a boy named Carr, the paper says.

MRS. TEVIS [*arrested by the name*]. Carr? Carr?

MRS. STUTTS. Umn—Hmn! Carr. And not a very private Carr, either, I guess, from the reputation he has. [*She rises again and puts her chair back.*] I hope you'll all have a real Happy New Year, all of you. And I wouldn't worry about Mr. Tevis, if I was you. I shouldn't wonder if he wasn't out, having a little time—on his own.

MRS. TEVIS [*blightingly*]. Really, Mrs. Stutts! I can't imagine what you mean.

MRS. STUTTS. My husband is like that. He'll go out like a lion and come in like a lamb.—Well, remember me to your daughter. [*Coming back.*] I shouldn't wonder if she knows his brother. The paper says this dancing-boy has got a brother in Layton & Gray's law-office. Your daughter is a stenographer there, isn't she?

MRS. TEVIS [*importantly*]. Mr. Layton's secretary.

MRS. STUTTS. Does she know him?—This *Carr*, the dancing-boy's brother there?

MRS. TEVIS. I believe so.—Mr. Layton himself is, of

course, everything one would expect of a charming, well-bred man.

Mrs. Stutts. He don't get on with his wife, this Layton.—O no! I heard it from my manicure, that Nettie Dark. She knows the brother, too, she says—I mean the Carr where your daughter works. Oh, yes!—Well, honestly, I *must* go. I—— [*She goes toward the door. One hears the outer door open.*]

Mrs. Tevis [*in relief*]. Ah! That must be my husband!—Adolph! *Adolph!* Is that you?

[*The door opens and* Tishy *is heard speaking. She is a very pretty girl, quietly and simply dressed, of some* 22 *or* 23 *years of age. Notwithstanding her great good looks she has an air of self-reliance, capability, youthful dignity—for she bears a heavy burden of responsibility. She is the moving force of the family, the one on whom the others rely. Since childhood she has had to face unpleasant facts, deal with unpleasant situations, adjust unpleasant conditions. Her natural buoyancy and keen sense of humor have kept her from any settled bitterness and pessimism; and a fastidious taste has kept her so far from absorbing any of the commonnesses of the workers' life she is a part of. She presents the figure of a charming, straightforward, clean-minded, cultured girl, yet one who is neither ignorant of, nor afraid of, nor a falsifier of, the phases of human nature she comes in contact with. One hears two voices,* Tishy's *and* Carr's, *youth and laughter and a holiday spirit in their notes.*]

Tishy [*gayly, her head in the door*]. It's I, Mummy—Hello!

Mrs. Tevis. O it's you, darling Tishy! Is your father with you?

Tishy [*enters*]. No, it's Mr. Carr.—Come in, Emmet.—Good-evening, Mrs.—ah——

Mrs. Stutts. Stutts.

Tishy. Stutts.

[Carr *presently follows* Tishy *in, leaving his hat and*

coat outside. He is a young man with plenty of charm and physical attractiveness; and he is intelligent, ambitious, proud—the pride which often results from a feeling of being inferior socially to those about one and the assurance that one is worth as much as the next person. He has two pretty distinct sides—a common one and a fine delicate one, the latter evoked by TISHY. *His lack of sureness in the* TEVIS *milieu gives him a rather taking shyness at times. He is some* 27 *or* 28 *years old—quietly dressed in a business suit.*]

TISHY [*crossing to* MRS. TEVIS]. Well, Mummy? [*She kisses her mother.*] Have you had a nice day?

MRS. TEVIS [*long-sufferingly*]. Darling! I?

TISHY. Where's father?

MRS. TEVIS. Tishy—I'm rather worried. He—he went out for a walk and——

[CARR *appears, saying "Good-evening" at the door.*]

TISHY. Don't worry. He'll be in soon. Here's a New Year's nosegay I brought you—*narcissussuses!* [*She gives her a little bunch of narcissus which she has brought in with her.*] Mr. Carr came up from the office with me, like an angel, to wish us a Happy New Year. [*She removes her hat and coat.*]

CARR [*coming over to* MRS. TEVIS *and giving his hand.*] Good-evening, Mrs. Tevis. It's nice to see you again. I hope you are pretty well—she looks it, doesn't she, Tishy?

MRS. TEVIS [*icily*]. Thank you.—I am not at all well.

CARR [*heartily*]. Sorry to hear that. I told Tishy this evening that I wanted to run up and wish you all the happiest kind of New Year. I've got a hunch that this new dozen of months ahead is going to bring us all a fine big crop of luck—strike twelve for the lot of us. [*His eyes are on* TISHY *as he speaks.*]

MRS. TEVIS [*without interest*]. Indeed? Twelve what?

MRS. STUTTS [*eager to join the conversation*]. That's

what I tell Ed—my husband: "Look for the silver lining and you will find the sunny side of life." But Ed says he's afraid he'll be sunstruck, if it gets any sunnier for him. [*She giggles fatuously.*]

CARR [*to* TISHY]. This year I'm going to find the sun—I know it. And bask—just bask!

TISHY. Lizard! [*Coming to her mother.*]

MRS. STUTTS [*coyly*]. All alone?

CARR [*not at all sententiously*]. O a man is never happy if he is alone—nor alone if he is happy!

TISHY [*rallying him on his epigram*]. You read it in a book! "How to be Happy Though Young."

CARR [*warmly*]. I didn't. I made it up on the spot!

TISHY [*by* MRS. TEVIS's *chair; reminiscently*]. Mumsey, do you remember my old nurse, Anna? How every New Year's day she used to come bouncing into my nursery, singing: [*She half sings in imitation of old* ANNA.] "God bless Miss Tishy this Happy New Year—God bless Miss Tishy, bless Miss Tishy, this happy, happy New Year!"

[MRS. STUTTS *privately thinks this very silly.*]

MRS. TEVIS. Hmn!—Well, it didn't seem to do you much good.—I *do* wish your father would come in.

MRS. STUTTS [*moving off*]. Well, Mercy, now I *am* going! You must all come and see me sometime, won't you? You, too, Mr. Carr.—A very lovely New Year to you all! I hope your hunch comes true, Mr. Carr. *Sunshine!*

MRS. TEVIS [*unable to contain her anxiety*]. Tishy —I'm certain your father has been killed!

MRS. STUTTS [*innocently*]. O dear, Mrs. Tevis, aren't you the gloom? Mr. Tevis didn't look a bit dead when I saw him this afternoon with a certain little lady I could name—I *could*, but I wouldn't give him away!—Honestly, he was acting like a regular live-wire!—Well, goodby, all! And a very, very lovely New Year! [*She trips off girlishly, waving her hand in farewell.* CARR *bows.*]

MRS. TEVIS. Good-evening.

TISHY. Good-evening.—Oof! What an ass that woman is! She *oozes* musk! [*She opens a window for an instant.*]—Mother! How *can* you stand that loathsome person—how *can* you?

MRS. TEVIS. Darling Tishy, I am perfectly aware of the fact that she is a vulgar, common creature, but I suppose one must submit to anything and—[*with a glance at* CARR] anybody—in a Hundred and Eighty-ninth Street. [*Behind* CARR's *back she makes an irritated gesture towards the door, indicative of her desire to have* TISHY *dismiss him.*]

TISHY [*closing the window; keeping her good humor*]. Poor Mumsey!—O I forgot, mother, we've had a——

MRS. TEVIS [*in a whisper, to* TISHY]. *Qu'il s'en aille!*

TISHY [*equably*]. We've had a present. On the way home Mr. Carr became hopelessly infected with the holidays, rushed into a shop and bought two rich wreaths with red ribbons on them—while I screamed like a lady, at the top of my lungs. Didn't I, Emmet?

CARR. You did.

TISHY. Where are they? Get 'em!

CARR [*going to the hall to fetch the wreaths*]. They're out here.

MRS. TEVIS. O I wish your father would come!—Send that young man away!

TISHY [*taking the tea tray into dining-room*]. After all, Mother, you *might* remember that he is my friend—and our guest.

MRS. TEVIS [*long-sufferingly*]. Mon Dieu, what I have to endure!

TISHY [*she reënters, trying her best to enliven the occasion.* CARR *comes back with the wreaths*]. Look, Mumsey! Aren't they festive? We're very pleased and flattered, aren't we, dear?

MRS. TEVIS [*bitingly*]. Very pretty, I'm sure, if one cares for wreaths. But a little late in the day, isn't it?

CARR [*embarrassedly—helplessly—at what seems a faux pas*]. Is it? I—Tishy said—I——

TISHY [*coming to his rescue*]. Late? For those two elegant objects? Never!

MRS. TEVIS [*with rich sarcasm*]. I remember being in the country once, as a young girl, and taking holiday greens to the inmates of the town poor-house.—Tishy, darling, I'll go to my room and lie down a little while, I think. Since my operation the slightest exertion simply *terrasse-s* me.—Good-night, Mr. Carr.

CARR [*gravely*]. Good-night, Mrs. Tevis.

MRS. TEVIS. Tishy, as soon as your father comes, tell me. [*She goes out without giving* CARR *her hand.*]

CARR [*facing* TISHY *with a droll little smile*]. You know, sometimes I almost think your mother doesn't quite like me.

TISHY [*with affected solemnity*]. Sometimes I almost think she doesn't.

CARR [*sincerely*]. I'm sorry—awfully sorry. [*They smile ruefully.*] She thinks I'm not your sort. Well, I guess I'm not.

TISHY [*seriously*]. Emmet, you mustn't mind Mamma. Please don't. She's had a lot to lose—besides money. And she's not well, not at all well.—Me, I don't like being poor a bit more than she does—I'm no early Christian. Only I—— You see, I was only ten when the bottom fell out of our high estate, and we fled to Europe and cheap *pensions*, and then fled back again because the war made even that impossible. So now I—— Oh, don't let's talk of it! [*Taking the wreaths from him.*] Where'll we hang the rich, round wreaths?

CARR. By George, you're a plucky girl!

TISHY. I'm not. But what you've got to do, you've got to do. That's my little motto.

CARR [*smiling*]. And if it hurts——?

TISHY. Then it hurts.—What would be your feeling about one on each of these doors? Or would it be too

Christmas-cardy? [*She stands with a wreath at arm's length before her, looking particularly charming.*]

CARR [*his eyes on her adoringly*]. Beautiful! I think it's beautiful!

TISHY. Or perhaps over there, chastely? [*Indicating the upper side of the room.*]

CARR. That's beautiful!

TISHY. Then of course there are the windows.—Rather obvious, eh?

CARR. Beautiful!

TISHY. See here, have you no mind of your own? Everything can't be beautiful.

CARR. Yes, it can. Sometimes.

TISHY [*quickly—to change the subject*]. Well, I think the doors.—Hold one up there, will you?—against the door—while I cock my head on one side and——

[CARR *holds up the wreath.*]

CARR [*pricking his fingers, but speaking most politely*]. Hell!

TISHY. Beautiful was the word you used before. They do prick, don't they?—Cling to it desperately till I get some thumb-tacks. [*She finds some thumb-tacks on the table, and goes to him with them.*] Hold it!—*There!* [*She pricks her fingers.*] Ouch!—O how right you were just now!

CARR. When?

TISHY. When you said it.

CARR [*laughing happily*]. You hold it. I'll jab.—O Hang!—The tack's buckled!

TISHY. Here! [*She gives him another tack.*] Jab!

CARR. Of course, when your hair tickles my ear, I can't be expected to—— If you'd come closer it wouldn't tickle so much.

TISHY. Coward! Let me jab!

CARR. You shan't jab! [*He affixes the wreath.*] There! [*Regarding his handiwork.*] I ask you? Didst ever see a fairer door? It's the door to Paradise.

TISHY [*resolutely*]. And for that very reason the door you've got to go out of—and soon too. I have to cook food for my sainted parents.

CARR [*affecting great depression*]. It's the door to hell!—Can't I stay a little longer?

TISHY [*airily*]. All right. Let 'em starve!

CARR. I'll help you! I can cook——

TISHY. No! Mamma has borne all she can to-day.—I don't even dare tack up this one—— [*Picking up the other wreath.*]

CARR. Give it to *me.*—I'm not afraid of anything. [*He takes the wreath from her and starts toward the bed-room door.*]

TISHY. Do be careful!—No human power can save you, if she hears——

[CARR *with elaborate caution is attaching the wreath to the door. It drops. Smothering an exclamation he stoops to pick it up.* MRS. TEVIS *unexpectedly opens the door.*]

MRS. TEVIS [*indignantly*]. May I ask, Mr. Carr, what you are doing at my bed-room door?

CARR [*meekly*]. I was just hanging a little wreath on it.

MRS. TEVIS. A wreath? A *wreath?*—Mr. Carr, I am not in the habit of having wreaths, or anything else, hung on my bedroom door. I regard it as most—most inopportune.

TISHY [*stifling her laughter*]. Darling! I made him do it.

MRS. TEVIS [*frigidly*]. Oh!—Hasn't your father come in?

TISHY. No, dear, not yet.

MRS. TEVIS. O dear! I'm nervous enough now without coming out and finding a wreath on my door. [*She retires again to her room, shutting the door forcibly.*]

TISHY. There! Now you *have* done it!

CARR. I *will* hang it there anyway! [*He affixes the*

wreath to the door, and stands off.] Don't they look—as you might say—companionable? Or *mated*—perhaps mated is the word?

TISHY [*quickly to avoid difficulty*]. I seem to prefer companionable. [*Indicating the wreaths.*] They're rather sweet, aren't they?

CARR [*ingenuously*]. It's almost—don't you think—as if we'd hung them up in—in our own——? O Lord, it must be nice to have a place and—somebody—all your own. A place where you could hang wreaths and——

TISHY [*with a twinkle in her eye*]. Mamma doesn't seem to think so. [*She sits.*]

CARR [*getting a chair and sitting near her*]. Do you know something? I've never hung up a holiday wreath before in my life. Our family—we weren't the holiday kind. These—with you—they're my first. Funny, isn't it?

TISHY. No, it isn't funny. It's rather—heart-breaking.

CARR. And I've never had a present from any one in my family—six of us, there are. My mother—she prays a good deal, but she never remembers.

TISHY [*sympathetically*]. Oh!

CARR. So when you gave me this—[*touching a blue silk handkerchief in his breast-pocket*] the other day—made it yourself—*well!*

TISHY [*lightly*]. It's a shower and a blower both—that handkerchief. I couldn't let you go on—could I?—leaving little bunches of flowers on my desk, day after day, without making a lady-like return for the delicate attention.

CARR [*with growing fervor*]. The first time I left a bunch of posies on your desk—do you remember? It was the day after I brought you those deeds to copy. And we talked—[*a pause—their eyes meet*]—I talked and you answered.

TISHY [*smiling reminiscently*]. Yes. We—we talked.

CARR. I was afraid of you, a little. I am yet. I always will be.

TISHY [*pretending dismay*]. Emmet, you must be psycho-analyzed at once!

CARR. The nicest thing about you is that you're so nice, Tishy! When I saw you that first day in the office, I thought—"O Lord! If only I can get to *know* that girl. If she'll only condescend to look at me, once a week even! And if she'll say 'good-morning,' well——!"

TISHY [*smiling*]. How absurd you are, Emmet.

CARR. You'd be absurd too if a lady-angel suddenly up and said "Hello" to you.—It's a funny thing. You think you're set; that you'll just go on, plugging along in your that's-good-enough way; and then you break your shoe-string, or lose a filling out of your tooth, or—a girl says "good-morning," and everything is changed—forever.

TISHY [*thoughtfully as she rises and moves away*]. Maybe it just *seems* changed.

CARR [*coming toward her*]. No—changed—beautifully.

TISHY. I don't know.—I don't think I have much faith—my life has been too quick-sandy. Sometimes I feel a hundred years old.

CARR [*warmly*]. I tell you *I know!* About myself *I know.* Things are changed for me.

TISHY [*soberly*]. I don't believe you *can* know. You think you're singing Grand Opera, sublimely, at the top of your lungs; and the next thing you know you're bawling some horrible hand-organ tune.—It's like that. It's all in the way you're made. [*She sits in an armchair.*]

CARR [*sitting near her*]. I don't believe that. I won't believe it. Once a man realizes the thing that's best inside him, he isn't going back to the worst of himself again. Not—not unless his heart breaks.

TISHY. I'm not sure.

CARR. Some day you will be. I'll make you. [TISHY *smiles doubtfully,* CARR *nods assertively.*] Yes!—Tishy, I can't tell you what you are for me. But I know—inside me I know. I knew that first day! I've always known there was *you* in the world. I knew—sort of blindly—dumbly.—Something was always wrong at home. I felt it as a kid. Wrong with us. Only I didn't know what it was—how to get anything better. There's my kid brother—I'll tell you about him—only not to-night.—I came down to Columbia—worked through the University—like a dog. It *was* like a dog. And I've dogged it through the Law School. And dogged it into Layton & Gray's.—And all the time I'd do things that didn't seem so—so bad at the time. But afterwards I'd—be ashamed.—Things——

TISHY [*sadly*]. I know.—Things.—Yes, I know all about that.

CARR. You understand? Things—O God, I don't know! Most men have them, I suppose.

TISHY [*thoughtfully*]. It's—it's a kind of—tarnish, isn't it?

CARR. Tarnish? You can clean tarnish, can't you?—Perhaps, if I hadn't got to know you, I'd have gone on getting tarnished, and finally, at last, not minding, not knowing.—Only now—there's *you.* And that's the other side—the shiny side—that's in me somehow. And so—you see—well, there's you.—Don't laugh.

TISHY [*deeply touched*]. Laugh? I'd sooner cry.—Has it been all that? So much? Me, I mean?

CARR. All that?

TISHY. Now *I'm* a little afraid. But I'm—I'm glad, Emmet.

CARR. Are you? God bless you!—And now, on top of that, listen to more New Year's news, "Miss!"—You know, Tishy, ever since that day in the restaurant, when I said "Miss!" to the waitress and you just *looked* at me——

TISHY [*embarrassed at the recollection*]. O Emmet!

CARR. And you just *looked* at me—well, I've never called "Miss!" to anyone since.

TISHY. You make me dreadfully self-conscious!—Smoke, if you like. [*As he feels for his cigarettes.*] Speaking of news—good?

CARR. The news? Rather tidy. [*He smokes.*]

TISHY. Tell—quickly!—And you might offer one to a lady.

CARR. Sorry;—Well—by a kind of sleight-of-hand performance, I've managed to save some money—a little. — [*Giving her a cigarette.*] Here you are!

TISHY. Saved?—Thanks!—— [*Taking the cigarette.*] Heavens! I wish I knew how it's done!

CARR [*lighting a match for her*]. Difficult trick, saving money!—Well, Layton called me in this afternoon and—Layton rather likes me—and told me about a thing he's engineering, a deal. And he said if I had a little money to put in, why——! And says I, "I've got a little thousand in my stocking"; and says he, "Produce it, me lad, and come in with us." And says I, "I'm your man!"

TISHY. Bondholder!—Are these your favorite cigarettes? [*Throwing away her cigarette.*]

CARR. Umn!—Awful to be common, eh?—Furthermore, said Layton delicately intimated that possibly in the course of time a certain young man, if he was good, might be invited to become a member of the firm of Layton & Gray.—Out of my way, Varlets!

TISHY [*heartily*]. Splendid. It *is* a New Year!

CARR [*leaning against the table*]. Isn't Layton a star? I tell you, I'm strong for that man. I'd do anything for him—wouldn't you? Isn't he a star? [TISHY *is silent*]. Why, Tishy, aren't you?—don't you——?

TISHY [*looking at him earnestly, though with a smile, quoting*]. "Good luck have thou with thine honor; ride on because of the word of truth; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things."

CARR. By George! Isn't that corking? "Good-luck have thou—with thine honor!" Great!—Bible?

TISHY [*nodding*]. Umn!—It's the perfect wish, isn't it? for a man's career.

CARR. Yes.—Lord, I've had a career—ever since you started saying "Good-morning" to me!—Let's see—it was just six months, two weeks, and three days ago at ten minutes to nine, that you began. And three days later I left my first timid posies on your type-writer.

TISHY [*softly*]. Violets.

CARR. Violets.—— [*Pause.*] Tishy?

TISHY. Yes?

CARR. Every day this year I'm going to leave a little flower on your desk.

TISHY [*quietly*]. No, you're not!

CARR. Why, "No—I'm—not?"

TISHY [*quietly*]. Because, in the first place, I've chucked my job with Layton & Gray.

CARR. *Chucked?*

TISHY. Yes—I'm not going back on Monday.

CARR. But why? Why on earth why?

TISHY. I'd rather not tell you.

CARR. But, Tishy—this spoils everything—it—*What is it?* Has some one done something? Tell me—maybe I can fix it.—O *no!* You *can't* leave!

TISHY. We won't talk about it.—Please! Not now. It isn't a very gay subject.—Tonight I'd like to be—I'd like to think I'm sort of happy. [*Rising.*] —They're rather pretty, aren't they?—The wreaths, you know.

CARR [*rising and coming to her; still distressed*]. But your leaving your job.—What will you——?

TISHY. Do? Hunt another job—quick! With the speed of an antelope!

CARR [*anxiously*]. But——

TISHY. Mercifully, O mercifully, my Aunt in a burst of death and generosity, left us, last year, an income of one thousand magnificent dollars. With that—and

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"holding good thoughts"—we can squeak along, till I find a new job.

CARR. Yes—only——

TISHY [*quietly*]. Only—I've always had to manage things in this house and I can now. You'll see.

CARR. O Tishy! You're wonderful! How does it go that song of yours? "God bless Miss Tishy this happy New Year"—— [*Laughingly he tries to recall the words and rhythm.*]

TISHY [*laughing with him*]. "God bless Emmet Carr this happy New Year"——

[*They finish the chorus of the song together very youthfully and gayly.*]

CARR [*radiant*]. Tishy—let's have a a Happy New Year—together.

TISHY [*defensively*]. The drawback to that is, you must go—this minute. [*She looks into the dining-room.*] Table not even set.—*Allez!* [CARR *follows her, and suddenly taking her in his arms he kisses her. For an instant she resists.*] *No, Emmet, no!* [*For an instant she lets herself go, her lips on his. Then she draws quietly away.*] That much—that little much—I take for my New Year. To keep. To remember.

CARR. Tishy Tevis—I'm in love with you—head over heels—I can't see straight—I can't think—You're just like God to me—I want to worship you—I feel small and mean and big and tall all at the same time—I—I—I—— Are *you* in love with me? *Are* you?

TISHY [*with a little smile*]. Oh—for a nickel—I could be.

CARR. *You are!* O Praise God, *you are!*

TISHY. I'm not going to be!—No, wait! I could have stopped your saying—what you've just said. I——

CARR. You couldn't!

TISHY [*trying to conceal her emotion*]. Well, anyhow I didn't.—It just suddenly seemed to me that I—I—I couldn't go on unless some one——

CARR. Who?

TISHY. Well, *you* then—said I was a nice girl. Tomorrow I'm going to be bold and brave again. Only tonight—— [*Wiping away a little tear*]. O Emmet, say I'm a nice girl again!

CARR [*incoherently*]. You're—you're—you're——

TISHY [*quickly—smilingly*]. It's all right. You needn't go on. I just wanted to be sure.—And tomorrow it's going to stop. [*She comes down to the desk.*]

CARR [*following*]. Tomorrow it *begins!*

TISHY [*firmly*]. *Stops.* The posies—the wreaths—you—everything.

CARR [*gravely*]. Why do you say that?

TISHY. Because there isn't any chance in the world for you and me. Because——

CARR. Go on.

TISHY. My mother and—and my father—I've got them. And they've got me—that's all they have got.—No, I can't leave here. [*She sits by the desk.*]

CARR [*quietly*]. I'm not asking that.

TISHY. What *are* you asking?

CARR. I'm asking you to let me love you. I'm asking you to love me. All the rest is simple—after that.

TISHY. Simple? Simple!—I tell you it's impossible. Us—us on your shoulders? That's where we'd be. O you don't know what you're talking about!

CARR. I know I want you—and I—O Tishy, you *do* want me! *Don't* you?

TISHY [*trying to be resolute*]. An engagement between us—it would be absurd! Something to drag out and grow soiled and faded and—and hopeless—as time goes on. It would *kill* me to see you get bored and tired and mechanical—to see you giving up your chances, your beautiful chances, because you are *tied.*—O there are relations in this world between men and women that don't tarnish—I'm big enough to see that—splendid, true relations—when a man really gives himself—and a woman gives her-

self—— [*As he attempts to speak.*] No, no! Please!—It's just hopeless for us, you and me.

Mrs. Tevis [*from her room*]. Tishy—hasn't your father come in yet?

Tishy. No, not yet, dear. [*Rising.*]

Carr. And isn't it anything to you that I love you? [*She is silent.*] *Isn't* it?

Tishy [*feebly*]. The wreaths *are* pretty, aren't they?

Carr. Answer me!—*Isn't* it—*Isn't* it?

Tishy [*in a scarcely audible voice*]. Ye-e-s——

[Carr *puts his hands on her temples and turning her face up to his looks adoringly, reverently, into her eyes.*]

Carr. You've got me—and I—O I've got *you!* [Tishy *releases herself; then drops with a sigh into his arms. After a pause.*] I feel like the day I went to war.—Tishy, all my life I'm going to love you and fight for you.

Mrs. Tevis [*from within*]. Tishy—I want to speak to you!

Tishy [*moving away from him*]. You'd better go, Emmet.

Carr. Go? Like this? I'll come back later!

Tishy [*with a twinkle in her eye*]. There's nothing more to say, is there?

Carr. Nothing more to say? My God, wait till you hear me!—Can't I come back?

Tishy [*as her mother calls again*]. Here?

Carr. Meet me outside! Meet me at the apartment-house door at—let's say eleven o'clock. Will you? We'll walk—walk into the New Year together. Will you? *You've got to!*

Mrs. Tevis [*emerging from her bedroom, at the limit of her nervous force*]. Mr. Carr—I'm sorry, but it is absolutely necessary that I speak to my daughter—at once. Would you mind—ah—leaving us?

Carr [*moving towards the door*]. I'm sorry, Mrs. Tevis, I——

[Mrs. Tevis *goes into the dining room.*]

Tishy. Good-night. Bless you for—for everything. —And "Good Luck have thou with thine honor."

Carr [*at the door in a low voice, pleadingly*]. Angel! —Tishy—*won't* you? *Won't* you meet me? *Please!*

Tishy [*hesitating*]. I oughtn't—I—Oh!—I——

Carr [*knowing she will meet him*]. O bless you, Tishy! And I'll be waiting! [*He departs happily.*]

Tishy [*as* Mrs. Tevis *enters*]. Mother, why are you behaving in this extraordinary way?

Mrs. Tevis. What you can see in that—that ordinary young man! It's beyond me. After all I've borne, to see the Tevis coming out in you—that would be the *comble*—the *comble!*

Tishy. Did Mrs. Healey leave things ready to be cooked for dinner?

Mrs. Tevis. That squaw? I believe so.

Tishy [*genuinely*]. O mother! I love Lizzie Healey!

Mrs. Tevis. This Carr. I suppose you know that his brother is a common, low, professional dancer in one of those disgusting cabarets.

Tishy. Is he? Well?

Mrs. Tevis. He was, till he ran off yesterday with *your cousin,* Ella Canby.

Tishy [*astounded*]. Emmet's brother? Ran off? With Ella?—Who told you that?

Mrs. Tevis. That creature upstairs.

Tishy [*putting away the tea-table*]. Oh!—More of her gossip.

Mrs. Tevis. O it's true! And I have to receive this dancer's brother in *my* house.—I can scarcely imagine my daughter making a fool of herself—not after you've seen what I've gone through with your father.

Tishy [*wearily*]. I know, mother, I know. [*She goes into the dining-room.*]

Mrs. Tevis. Well, this Carr is nothing to me. [*At the window looking out.*] I sent him away because I wanted

to talk to you about your father. He went out at two. It's six and he hasn't come home. I'm nearly frantic.

TISHY [*from within*]. I wouldn't take it so tragically. I expect he's——

MRS. TEVIS. Well, you heard what that woman upstairs said, didn't you? [TISHY *appears at the door.*] You heard that, didn't you? That she *saw* him? *With* someone?

TISHY [*at the desk*]. Yes, I heard. But *that* woman——

MRS. TEVIS. Tishy—there's—there's something else —I've got to tell you, I suppose.

TISHY [*apprehensively*]. What else? Mother? What is it? For Heaven's sake, what is it now ?

MRS. TEVIS. Well, the half-yearly check came this morning—after you had gone. That absurd little five-hundred-dollar check from your Aunt's estate. I should think she'd turn in her grave, if she ever remembers how she's treated her——

TISHY [*going to her*]. Yes, yes, Mother!—the half-yearly check came this morning and——

MRS. TEVIS. That's what I *said*. And as the next two days are holidays—how I hate holidays!—I very naturally thought——

TISHY. Yes—Yes——

MRS. TEVIS. I thought we'd better cash it all and have the money in the house to pay the bills—there's a pile of them now on the table—So I——

TISHY [*jumping to the conclusion*]. Mother! You didn't! *Mother*!

MRS. TEVIS [*sinking into her arm-chair*]. Now you're going to abuse me. And I thought I was doing everything for the best. [*Tearfully.*] Everything *I* do——

TISHY [*in dismay*]. You gave father the check to cash? Is that it?

MRS. TEVIS. Yes.

TISHY. Oh! [*Pause. She walks up and down the room*

trying to control her anger.] But haven't I *told* you—Haven't you *promised* not to let him have any money unless I—And after all we've gone through—After knowing for years what he *does* with money he has—*Oh!*—It's too discouraging!

MRS. TEVIS [*sobbing*]. Everything *I* do is wrong. Nobody gives *me* a kind thought.

TISHY [*regaining control of herself*]. There, Mumsey, there! You'll make yourself ill.—After all, we don't know that anything *has* happened, do we?

MRS. TEVIS. That woman upstairs said——

TISHY [*going to her mother*]. We won't cross the bridge yet.—Look, dear, you haven't put your little narcissuses in water.

MRS. TEVIS [*picking up the bunch of flowers from the large table where they were left*]. You don't suppose he's begun it again, do you? I've sort of thought lately sometimes—he's been so good-tempered—O Tishy, if he's begun it again——

TISHY [*re-assuringly*]. No—no, dear! Of course not.

[*She is at the desk, now, looking at the pile of bills there.* MRS. TEVIS *exits to the dining-room.* TISHY *opens an envelope which contains a letter and a bill. She smothers a little exclamation of dismay, as* MRS. TEVIS *returns, her flowers in a vase.*]

MRS. TEVIS. What?

TISHY. Nothing.—It's the doctor's bill—the rest of it. For your operation. He says he wants the money at once—must have it.

MRS. TEVIS. Harpy! [*Putting down the flowers.*

TISHY. And Monday the rent is due.—O Mother, if anything *has* happened to that money——

MRS. TEVIS. It ought to be free—this hole we live in. [*The outer door slams.* MRS. TEVIS, *as she hears the sound, goes toward the entry.*] Adolph—Adolph!

TEVIS [*jovially, outside*]. Well, Josie, my love——

MRS. TEVIS. *Adolph!—Where on earth have you been?*

TEVIS. Dear, dear, dear! Can't I take a little walk in the afternoon without——?

TISHY. Well, Daddy!—Home?

[TEVIS *looks in at the door. He is secretly much agitated but makes a very debonair effort to appear at his ease.* TEVIS *is* 65 *years old, or thereabouts—unhealthily fat, white-haired, with signs of long self-indulgences; puffy eyes, flabby skin, etc. He still betrays the evidences of the dandyism of his younger days—the too-bright tie, the flower in the button-hole, the clothes carefully brushed, clothes much worn and of a somewhat antiquated fashion. His manners are florid, his gestures courtly. His indulgences have undermined him physically, leaving him weak, nervous, and fatuous. He presents the painfully undignified figure of an old man who has squandered almost everything of value in his character and is still ridiculously at the mercy of his ungovernable, senile, sexual desires.*]

TEVIS. My Lambkin! [*He enters with an affectation of sprightliness.*] Give your venerable parent a kiss! [*He kisses* TISHY. MRS. TEVIS *follows.*] Ah, ha! Wreaths! Wreaths! Makes our little love-nest as cosy and bright as—as a little love-nest.—Eh, Mother?

MRS. TEVIS [*inflexibly*]. Adolph!—*Where have you been?*

[TISHY *takes his hat, stick, muffler and coat.*]

TEVIS [*sitting*]. Been? I? O—*flâné*-ing. Here! There! Everywhere! Like a bird! Yes, like a bird! Like a bird!

TISHY. Did you have a nice walk, Daddy?

TEVIS. Delightful—delightful!—Alluring shops—festive scenes—bright faces—"eyes looked love to eyes that spake again"—*Espiéglerie!*—The New Year—always the New Year! Eh, mother?

[MRS. TEVIS *sniffs.*]

TISHY [*disregarding the pantomime of* MRS TEVIS *indicative of her conviction that* TEVIS's *gayety bodes no*

good]. Well! you seem to have caught the spirit of the occasion beautifully.—Did you go far?—Did you meet any one you knew?

TEVIS. Far? To the utmost ends of the earth!—Meet anyone I knew? I met them all, knew them all, loved them all—the world, my brothers, my sisters.

MRS. TEVIS. Don't be a fool, Adolph!—Did you go to the bank?

TEVIS. The bank? Stately pile—floors of silver, doors of gold—what joys, what sorrows there! The Bank, ah!

MRS. TEVIS. O mon Dieu!—May I infer from your ridiculous conversation, that you *did* go to the bank?

TEVIS [*blandly*]. Josephine—you may.

MRS. TEVIS. And you've got the money?

TEVIS. .Got it? .[*Slapping his pockets elaborately.*] Oceans—barrels—oodles of it!

MRS. TEVIS [*sitting*]. Thank God for that! Now give it to Tishy.

TISHY [*good naturedly going over to him*]. Come along, Daddy. Produce the guilty gold. And I'll put it in the trusty despatch-box.

TEVIS. Miseress!

TISHY. "Hands up! The money or——"

TEVIS [*discovering the remnants of the gingerbread on a plate left behind on the large table*]. Ginger-bread! Ah! Ha! Festivitives in the little home-nest while the father-bird is away— [*He eats.*] Good—good!—God bless our little ginger-bread and make it a good girl!

MRS. TEVIS. God give me patience!

TEVIS. Josephine, your devoted husband—why conceal it?—is hungry. [*He unfolds the newspaper he has brought with him and affects deep absorption in it.*]

TISHY. I think you'd better let me have it, Daddy—and then I'll get your dinner.

TEVIS [*vaguely*]. Hmn?—Eh?—What, my dear?—Have what?

TISHY. The money.

TEVIS [*behind the paper*]. Eh?—What money?

TISHY [*pulling the newspaper down*]. Don't tease any more, Father. You'll have Mother in a *crise de nerfs* in another minute. Be nice.

TEVIS [*changing front—indignantly*]. I won't be badgered this way! I won't be treated like a child in my own house.—You and your mother both—yes, both of you—[*he changes to another chair*] —you treat me like a child —or worse—or worse.

TISHY. Now, Father——
MRS. TEVIS [*rising*]. Your own house—
your own——
} *Together*

TISHY [*aside*]. Mother! Don't! Let me.

[MRS. TEVIS *sits again.*]

TEVIS. Anybody would think I was a thief—a damned thief—the way you rush at me the moment I come in.—"Give it to me!"—I can't even read my paper.—"Give it to me!"—It's indecent!

[MRS. TEVIS *pantomimes to Tishy*s "*What are we to do now?*" TISHY *pantomimes in return*: "*Let me manage.*"]

TISHY [*kindly*]. Father, don't be absurd. You're a good little Daddy to go and take all that trouble to cash the check.

TEVIS [*peevishly*]. Ah! Ha! Now we have it. A good little Daddy.

TISHY. You see, there are lots of bills I have to pay—right off.—So please give me the money.—Daddy! [*She pulls away the newspaper.*]

TEVIS [*nerving himself for the effort.*] I—I—I was just joking, Tishy. My little joke—little joke. Of course you shall have it. Here—— [*He feels in his breast-pocket, then rapidly in all his pockets, finding nothing.*] Why—why—why, it was *here—here!* Why—why— [*Rising in consternation.*]

MRS. TEVIS [*rising. Violently*]. Adolph!—What have you done with that money?

[TEVIS *snatches up his overcoat, going frantically through the pockets.* MRS. TEVIS *takes it from him excitedly and searches too.*]

TISHY. Father! *No!* You haven't lost it!

TEVIS. It—it isn't here!—It's gone—it's *gone!*

MRS. TEVIS. *Gone?* You're mad! Gone where?

TEVIS [*dramatically*]. Robbed! I've been robbed! My pocket has been picked! [*He bursts into tears and goes back to his chair.*]

TISHY. Father! Stop! For goodness' sake, stop! Try to think!—Look again! Here, let me! It must be——

[TISHY *goes through the pockets desperately as he crosses.*] Oh, we *can't* lost that!

TEVIS. It's gone—gone! Oh what a wretched man I am! [*He staggers to his feet.*] The river! The cold dark river is the only place for me! I'm going to the river!

MRS. TEVIS. Adolph! Sit down! *Sit down!*

[TEVIS *obeys.*]

TISHY. But, father—*Where? How?*—Think—think—try to think——

TEVIS. Yes—let me think.—O my poor head! [*He has an idea.*] The child!—Ah, yes, the child!

MRS. TEVIS. Child? *What* child?

TEVIS. A child—a little pitiful homeless child—struck by a taxi-cab, knocked down and—O poor baby girl!

MRS. TEVIS [*distractedly*]. For pity's sake, Adolph——

TEVIS [*in full swing now*]. The crowd—the crowd gathering—I in the midst of them—and as I stood and wept over that bruised little body, my money—my money cruelly taken from me.—O my God! Let me go to the river! Let me rid my wife and child of this burden—forever! [*He stumbles to his feet.*]

Mrs. Tevis. Adolph—look at me! Look at me! Are you telling the truth? *Are you?*

Tevis. As there is a God above and as that God is my witness, I—— [*He puts his hand to his heart as if in sudden pain.*]. Ah! Ah! [*He topples.* Mrs. Tevis *catches him. She and* Tishy *help him to the sofa where he lies moaning.* Mrs. Stutts's *pianola on the floor above is maddeningly heard to play "The Love-Nest."*]

Tishy [*stopping her ears*]. Oh!

Mrs. Tevis. Do you believe him?

Tishy [*dully*]. I don't know.

Tevis. Oh!—My heart! My heart! My heart!

Mrs. Tevis. What are we to do?

Tishy. I don't know.

Mrs. Tevis [*sitting*]. O what have I done that I should have to suffer this. *I?*

Tishy [*hopelessly*]. Why—why did you give him the money?

Mrs. Tevis. Maybe he's telling the truth.

Tishy [*losing her control*]. What does it matter? O what does it matter? It's gone, isn't it? It's gone! Do you realize what you have done? *Do you?* Do you know we haven't a penny—not a penny? And no place to get any. And I—I didn't tell you—yes, that's the last delightful touch—I've had to give up my job.

Mrs. Tevis. Give it up? Give it *up?*

Tishy. That's where we are—*there!* Right there!—What do you expect me to do *now?* What do you expect me to do *now?*

Mrs. Tevis [*bursting into noisy sobs*]. O dear! O dear!—O dear!— [Tishy *stares hopelessly at the one and at the other—and then at the wreaths.*] O dear!—What is to become of me? [*She gets to her feet and staggers to her room. As she passes Tevis on sofa she speaks.*] O you miserable old man! [Tevis *continues to moan fitfully. .The pianola stops.*]

TEVIS.—Yes, yes—let him die—poor Tevis—poor Tevis——

[TISHY *regards him contemptuously, despairingly, struggling with her impulse to rush away forever from such scenes as these.—Her sense of responsibility, of the necessity of immediate action, of "going on," comes to the fore again. She squares herself to the situation and goes to her father.*]

TISHY [*gently, the only way to win him, as she knows*]. I wouldn't take it like that if I were you. You'll only make yourself ill.

TEVIS. I want to be ill. Die—die—die!

TISHY. That isn't going to get the money back.

TEVIS. A grave—*my* grave——

TISHY. Father—listen! [*With quiet command.*] I want you to get up. Come over here in your chair by the lamp.—Come! I'll help you.—Father!

[TEVIS *hesitates and then gives in to the girl's gentle authority. All his effervescence is gone now.* TISHY *assists him to a chair. A brief pause.*]

TISHY [*sitting near him*]. Now. You realize, don't you? that we are in a terrible situation. Losing this money? [TEVIS *groans.*] I—I don't know what we are going to do—if we don't find it. And that is why I want you to do all you can to help me to——

TEVIS. They picked my pockets—picked—picked—O dear, O dear, O dear!

TISHY. Try to be calm now—to think—to remember. If there is anything to be done, we must do it, mustn't we?

TEVIS. Yes—yes!—O my poor head!

TISHY. You must listen, Father. Now tell me.—You went to the bank——

TEVIS. Yes.

TISHY. And cashed the check. Was it in big bills?

TEVIS. I don't know.—Four hundreds and two fifties.

TISHY. You put it in your pocket. Which one?

TEVIS. This one.—No, this one here.—How can I remember?—This one.

TISHY. Are you sure?

TEVIS. No.—I don't know.—Yes.

TISHY. And you came out of the bank and—What did you do then?

TEVIS [*piteously*]. I tell you they picked my pocket—I want to go to bed. I—— [*He attempts to get up but she restrains him.*]

TISHY. You walked from the bank towards home?——Before you lost the money?

TEVIS. Yes!—Happy—happy as a child!—to be bringing gold home to my loved ones.

TISHY. And then you saw the accident?

TEVIS. O dear God, the accident!

TISHY. Tell me about the accident.—It was on Broadway, you said, where you were walking?

TEVIS. Yes.—No.—On St. Nicholas Avenue.

TISHY. And this poor little child——?

TEVIS. This poor little boy—his newspapers in his arms——

TISHY. A truck struck him and——

TEVIS. The truck—struck him—struck him——

TISHY. And he fell in the snow and the taxi-cab——

TEVIS. Yes, the taxi-cab— No, the truck!—Blood—Blood on the snow——

TISHY. There *is* no snow today.—And while you were standing there your pocket was picked, you think?

TEVIS. It wasn't my fault. Tishy—it wasn't!—You're cruel to me, cruel!—O what a life I lead here—with your mother and you.

TISHY. When did you miss it first?

TEVIS. The money? Not till later—long after——

TISHY. Then you *knew* it was gone, Father, when you came home?

TEVIS No—no—of course not—*Here*—I missed it *here!*—Why do you ask me these questions?

TISHY. We must try to get the money back—don't you see? If there is a chance.—What did you do then? After the accident?

TEVIS. After the accident? I walked—anywhere—everywhere——

TISHY. And—you were alone?

TEVIS. As in Gethsemane!

TISHY. But when you met Mrs. Stutts—the woman upstairs——

TEVIS. Who said I met Mrs. Stutts?

TISHY. Why you *did* meet her, didn't you?

TEVIS [*confused*]. Did I?—Stutts—Stutts?—Ah! The bootlegger's bride!

TISHY. You *did* meet her—didn't you?

TEVIS. I—I—I—I——

TISHY. *Didn't* you?

TEVIS. I may have met her.

TISHY. But when you met her, you were not alone!

TEVIS [*going to pieces*]. Alone?—I—I—I—*was*—alone—I'm alone now—God, I'm alone.

TISHY [*quietly*]. Father—you're lying! You've been lying all the time.

TEVIS [*in the last attempt*]. Tishy, if it were my dying word, I'd swear——

TISHY. Stop! Don't go on! It—it isn't any use.—This isn't the first time. [*Wearily—without much hope.*] What have you done with it?—Answer me!—*What have you done with it!*

TEVIS. I—I—Tishy, have pity on me—You don't know—You don't understand—You're—you're a young girl—you——

TISHY [*trying to master her repulsion*]. Father—you've given it to—to somebody.—Is that it. *Is* it?

TEVIS. I—I—had to— [TISHY *gives a little cry.*] —I—O I can't talk to you about it!—A man would understand, but *you*——

TISHY. You've given the money to—some woman—haven't you?

TEVIS—O Tevis—Tevis—why does God let you live?

TISHY. *Who was it?*

TEVIS. Oh! What does it matter who it was now?

TISHY. It matters just this: You or I have got to try to get the money back—*from her*—the woman you were with today.

TEVIS [*sincerely*]. You—my daughter—!—Go to her? No! Not if we starve, all of us—in the gutter!

TISHY. Then will *you* go?

TEVIS [*whimpering*]. I don't know how she got it from me—Tishy, as God sees his poor little children, I didn't mean to give it all to her—only a few dollars to help a poor young girl.—But—but——

TISHY [*in the last appeal*]. Father, will you go to her?

TEVIS. Me?—I—I—No!—— [*His voice drops to a whisper.*] .I'm afraid of her—*afraid*——

TISHY. *You must!*

TEVIS. I can't—I can't——

TISHY. *Then I've got to go!*—Who is she? Where is she?

TEVIS [*moaning*]. Tishy! don't tell your mother—don't tell her——

TISHY. Who is she?

TEVIS. I won't tell!—I won't tell!

TISHY. [*in desperation—crying out piteously*]. I've got to get it—I've got to get it!—Can't you understand?—O why don't you *help* me—*help me?* Tell me—tell me!—Daddy! Why don't you *help* me?

TEVIS. Too late—too late——

[*One hears* MRS. STUTTS *again at "The Love Nest."*]

TISHY. I've got to find out. I've got to find out—*somehow*—[*looking up.*] Oh!—That! [*In anguish at the thought of further humiliation at* MRS. STUTTS'S *hands.*]

TEVIS [*agonizedly; comprehending*]. My Baby! My Lamb! No! No!

MRS. TEVIS [*running out from her room*]. What is it? Oh God, what is it now?—Tishy! Where are you going?

TISHY [*at the door, with a hard little laugh*]. I?—I'm going to call on the "bootlegger's bride." [*Exit.*]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE: *A few hours later than Act One—about half past eight in the evening.*

The curtain rises on the apartment of Nettie Dark. At the moment it is in obscurity save for a light—an electric hanging-lamp with a red shade—in the entrance-hall, and a small lamp on a table at the head of the bed. The stage presents a small sitting room, opening out of which is a bedroom, or, one might say, an alcove, since the larger part of the back wall has been cut to form an arch, thus making the rear room almost entirely visible. This arch is curtained with cretonne of a very vivid, new-art pattern, but the curtains are pushed back as far as possible to either side. The upper left hand corner of the room is missing, that is to say there is a doorway here, set obliquely across, through which one sees a small entry, with a door at the rear leading to the hallway of the house. Lower down on the left is an old-fashioned white marble fireplace—the apartment is in an old dwelling-house in the 40's *near Sixth Avenue—no longer usable, the aperture being covered. Over it is a large mirror with a tarnished gold frame.*

The walls of the sitting-room and bedroom are covered with a rather muddy-colored, brown-yellow-green paper, usually referred to as "tapestry." The furniture is meretricious, vulgar, cheap, and of different varieties—in short anything that has happened to take MISS DARK'S *lively fancy. Near the fireplace is a chaise-longue in bright new unvarnished wicker with a bright cushion. There is a wicker table near the chaise-longue on which is a red velvet cover. A plate of frosted cup-cakes,* 2 *other plates, cigar-*

ettes in a holder, matches and ash tray, 2 large high-ball glasses, a telephone, 2 cups and saucers, spoons, 2 knives and forks, a lemon-squeezer, and some lump sugar are also carelessly set out on this table.

A standing brass ash-tray is near the chaise-longue. By the table is a wicker chair. Across the room against the wall is a divan with a very shabby purple velvet cover and a number of cushions in various shades of purple, mauve and yellow. Near it is a rocking-chair, below, a little tabouret. The upper corner has a small table on which is a Victrola—the records on a shelf underneath and scattered on the floor. To the right of the arch is a small gold chair; to the left of it a little table dedicated to a large ugly vase containing artificial poinsettias and a framed photograph. At the head of the divan there is a tall standard lamp with a bizarre shade made of dark blue, silk lined with red. The mantel-shelf's chief treasure is an alabaster Buddha, about a foot high, made to glow internally by means of an electric light. There are on it also some green candlesticks with red wax candles; a piece or two of "Bohemian glass"; several photographs of men, signed, and a few of women; a small black elephant, and one or two fantastic dolls—"mascottes." The pictures on the wall are either sentimental or risqué in subject and bright in color. There is a central light in the ceiling, in a large cylindrical sort of cage made of yellow silk, and bracket lights on each side of the mantel.

The view one has of the bedroom gives a sight of the bed set in the middle of the room, its head against the rear wall. It is of wood with a spread and pillow-cover of reddish-purple silk. To the left of it stands a little night-table with a much-shaded night-lamp. Against the wall is a dressing-table. At right and left are doors, the one leading to the bathroom, the other to a closet.

Immediately upon the rise of the curtain the entrance door to the apartment opens and Nettie Dark *appears. She carries a paper bag containing rolls, lemons and*

some sliced turkey. She comes straight through the hall to the sitting room, pushes on the electric light button at the doorway, controlling the ceiling light, and deposits her bundles on the table with a sigh of relief.

One perceives that NETTIE, *while not pretty, nor beautiful, has the "certain something" which attracts—that is to say, attracts men. She is small, lithe, dark-haired, rather sallow of skin, but her eyes are brilliant and bold and expressive; and her face, a little dull and sullen in repose, lights up when she is in a good humor, with a curious youthful charm, heightened by a warm, sensuous smile. She looks what she is to men: companionable and dangerous.—As she comes into the room, she is wearing a gray fur coat and a small bright turban. As soon as the packages are disposed of, she pulls off her hat and throws it into a chair. As she removes her coat she regards the much-worn lining and whistles a single rueful note at its sorry state. Her dress is of plain black with a little white collar, and she has discarded all ornaments, except one or two of the simplest, and a wrist-watch. She goes to the table near the fire-place, finds and lights a cigarette, then regards herself critically in the mirror, nodding disapproval at the effect.*

NETTIE. Lord! I look like the "Two Orphans"! [*She takes down a photograph of Carr from the mantel, looking at it long, earnestly and reflectively; her head nods assent to her thoughts*]. Gee!—Just my dirty luck! [*She seizes the telephone viciously.*] Hello, Freddie, is that you? Connect me with Miss Vinton's, will you?—I forgot your Christmas, but I'll remember it's New Year's.—Hello, Ag!—Where *am* I? Why I'm in a "covered wagon" headed for California.—No, you fool! I'm home. —Say, Ag, come down here! I want you to do something for me.—All right! Make it snappy. [*As she empties the bag of food, the bell rings. She goes to the door.*] Oh!—Come on in, Ag?

AGGIE [*at the door*]. Net—are you alone?

NETTIE. Ay-ugh, but if I have any luck, I *won't* be long.

AGGIE. Oh!

NETTIE [*entering, followed by* AGGIE]. Say, you look all in.

[AGGIE *is a thin, consumptive, weakly pretty creature, with suspiciously yellow and very untidy hair, her eyes red from weeping. Hardship, ill health, and reckless living have deeply marked her pale vapid face. She wears a dirty wrapper over which she has huddled a man's overcoat.*]

AGGIE. I am—about!—Lord, it's cold, ain't it?—You going to have a party, Net?

NETTIE. I'm going to make an awful stab at one, dearie. Somebody has got to play with me tonight. This old year isn't going to ooze away with me sitting alone at the parlor-organ singing hymns—*not!*

AGGIE [*plaintively*]. It's going to be a hell of a New Year's for me, all right.

NETTIE. Say, Ag—you want to do something for me?

AGGIE. Me?

NETTIE. Ay-ugh.

AGGIE. What you want me to do?

NETTIE [*abruptly*]. Ag—telephone to Emmet Carr for me, will you?

AGGIE. What—*me?*

NETTIE. Ay-ugh! Listen! I want to see him. I gotta. I want to see him to-night.

AGGIE. But——

NETTIE. I know. But he won't come for me. He won't. I 'phoned to him twice before I come in to-night, and he threw me down—cold. You 'phone him for me.

AGGIE. But if he—Lord, what'll I say?

NETTIE. Tell him—O tell him I'm in trouble—awful—that I need help or something—and that I don't know you're telephoning, see? And that you knew he was my

best friend—you know the kind of song-and-dance. Will you? I've helped you out before now. Will you?

AGGIE [*going to the telephone*]. God, if you're as anxious as all that—— What's the matter, you and him had a row?

NETTIE [*eagerly*]. Go on and telephone—it's Bryant 8702.

AGGIE. Lord, Net, I don't know what to say to him,—Bryant what-is-it?

NETTIE. 8-7-0-2—Go on, Ag!

AGGIE. Hello!—Honest, Net, I—hello!—I want Bryant 8270——

NETTIE. No, you fool——

AGGIE [*on the arm of the chaise-longue*]. No, 8702—Ay-ugh!—What is it, Net, a house or——? I want to speak to Mr. Carr—Ay-ugh, Mr. Carr.—My God, Nettie, I do' know what to—Hello—This is Aggie—Ay-ugh, Aggie, Mr. Carr—You know, what lives over Nettie—I wanted to tell you—You see Nettie don't know I've called you up, but—Why, she's in trouble—I do' know.—And I just left her crying and going on awful, enough to break your heart and she's all alone down there.—No, only it's something pretty bad, I guess, and *I* thought I'd tell you on my own, and maybe you'd go in for a minute and see her, being New Year's eve and all. Could you?—Ay-ugh—Ay-ugh—I hope so, too, but I guess it won't be.—Well, good-night.

NETTIE [*anxiously*]. Well—what'd he *say*, Ag? What'd he *say?*

AGGIE. He says he'll come.

NETTIE [*kissing her*]. Hurray! When?

AGGIE. Now. For a minute. He's going somewhere afterwards.—God, I hate to lie like that.

NETTIE. Ag, you're a peach.

AGGIE [*miserably*]. Peach! Me! [*She begins to weep.*]

NETTIE [*continuing to open her packages*]. What's the matter, Ag?—Is *he* worse?

AGGIE. Ay-ugh——

NETTIE. Much?

AGGIE. Ay-ugh—pneumonia, I guess.

NETTIE. Gee! [*She goes to the closet to get a coffee-pot and an electric heater.*]

AGGIE. That ain't all—I gotta get him things—God, I gotta eat myself!—Say, you musta robbed Park and Tilford's, ain't you?—Well, the old woman was up to-night. She says if we don't pay the rent Monday—*out*. I'm sick of paying, and nothing to pay with.—What's that? Cold turkey?

NETTIE. Sure, take some.

AGGIE. I ain't had a thing but a cup of tea and some saltines since morning.

NETTIE. You poor kid!—[*Taking coffee-pot to bath-room for water.*] I'm too tired to eat.

AGGIE [*eating a bit*]. It's good, ain't it?—Nettie, I hate to—you know—to make a touch, but honest, I don't know what to do.—Could you?—You couldn't, could you? A little?—What's a girl like me, with a man on her hands, and sick too—what's she going to do? Say?

NETTIE. Well, what do you stay with him for?

AGGIE. I do' know.—[*Sitting down drearily.*] What does anybody stay with anybody for? [*She tries to eat a little.*] I do' know what I'm going to do. [*With a sob.*]

NETTIE. You stuck on him still?

AGGIE. I do' know—I guess so.

NETTIE [*looking at* CARR'S *picture*]. It's hell when you fall for 'em, isn't it? Especially when they don't fall back.

AGGIE. He liked me all right—once.

NETTIE. Ay-ugh, they're *all* like that—once.

AGGIE [*rising and crossing toward the door*]. Well,

if you can't, Net—I—I just thought maybe if you could—

NETTIE [*getting her hand-bag and extracting a hundred-dollar bill*]. Here! Take that! 'Tisn't pay for what you've done. I was going to give it to you anyway.

AGGIE [*looking at the bill and beginning to cry*]. My God!

[NETTIE *hurriedly puts together some turkey, rolls, and cakes in a bit of paper.*]

NETTIE. Here, Ag! Grab this! And beat it! My New Year's party'll be here *toot sweet.*

AGGIE [*in tears*]. Net—O Net—You've gave me a hundred dollars——

NETTIE. Oh, shut up! It's all right! And don't let *him* get his ten-tackles on it. [*She starts the phonograph in the hope of cheering* AGGIE.] I been hard up as God-knows-what myself lately—just paid my own rent to-night. I made a touch to-day. I *did!* Hence the poor working girl—— [*With a gesture at her sober costume.*] You'd a-died a-laughing if you'd seen him. [*She imitates* TEVIS.] "Ah, the little love-bird—she wants a Happy New Year."

AGGIE [*a little distressed*]. But, Net—you didn't——

NETTIE. Oh, no, dearie! Don't think it. I didn't have to pay the "awful price." He's just a poor old boob that falls for "the-young-girl-in-trouble" stuff, if you cry a little and let him hold your hand under the table. He's mush now, but I guess he was some little Bluebeard in his day. Ain't it awful though to see these old birds lick their chops? Well, I borrowed some from him "on account." Hence the pyramids.—Go on, Ag! Beat it! [*She shoves her gently to the door.*] And keep up your pep—you'll be on the Keith Circuit yet!—Sure, you will!

AGGIE [*incoherently*]. Net—you're just *grand—you're—you're*—I—I *love* you—I do! [*Exit.*]

NETTIE [*laughing*]. Do you? I'm glad somebody does! [*As she comes back.*] Poor kid! [*She light-*

heartedly continues her preparations for CARR'S *reception, moving out the table, putting on the standard lamp, and lighting incense. Now and then she sings to the tune the victrola is rattling forth. She adds the finishing touch, a half bottle of gin, which she elaborately brings out from behind the covering to the front of the fireplace. Then surveying the scene.*] Well, Happy New Year to all! [*Stopping the victrola.*] Shut up, you! [*The doorbell rings. She gives a touch to her hair before the mirror, and goes to open the door.*] [*In the entry.*] Why, Emmet Carr!—You angel! Where'd you come from? I could hug you!

CARR [*without much cordiality*]. Hello, Nettie!

NETTIE [*preceding him in*]. Well, Mr. Stranger, come on in.

CARR [*as he enters*]. Can't stay long.—I got an S.O.S. from Aggie, so desperate I—Phew! It smells to God in here!

NETTIE. From Aggie? What you *mean?*

CARR. She telephoned—a little while ago—that you were having troubles of your own—insisted on my coming to see you. So I——

NETTIE. Ag? Well, what do you know about that? She had no business to—— Why, she was in here and, I don't know, I guess I kinda lost my nerve and upset the apple-cart and cried in my beer. Poor old Ag! If I'd a-thought she'd go and telephone *you*, Met, I'd—— Well, it's awfully good of you to "come over," Metty. Honestly, it's just dear!—Why, it's incense, don't you like it?

CARR [*awkwardly*]. O that's all right.—No, I hate it!—[*He stands rather ill at ease, his overcoat on, his hat in his hands.*] Well—what's the trouble, Nettie? Price of nail-files gone up, or what? [*Laughing lamely at his weak joke.*]

NETTIE [*quenching the incense.*] There! Fussy!—Here—give me that coat and——

CARR. O don't bother! I guess I'll——

NETTIE [*affecting impatience*]. Well, for Heaven sakes!—Give me that coat!

CARR [*protesting*]. Oh——

NETTIE. Stubborn! Give it here! [*He yields reluctantly.*] There! You won't feel it when you go out. [*She throws it on her bed, with his hat.*] Sit down there on the "chasey-longy" and stretch yourself out and have a cigarette. *Go on!*

CARR. No—I'll sit here. [*He takes the rocker and lights one of his own cigarettes.*] Got to go soon.

NETTIE. Same old coffin-nails, I see—Gee! I love 'em! Give me one.

CARR [*avoiding her eyes*]. Umn-hmn! [*He gives her a cigarette and strikes a match.*]

NETTIE [*curling up on divan; inspecting him critically*]. Thanks! Well, Little Lost-and-Found! How be? How come?—You look kinda—kinda jazzy, Emmet. Been up to your little tricks again, I guess, huh? Naughty, naughty!

CARR [*trying with difficulty to be companionable*]. Me?—Nothing but hard work—plenty of it—night and day——

NETTIE. Selfish!—Well, of course, I don't know. I never see you.

CARR [*impatiently*]. Too busy—too busy, Nettie.—What time have you? [*Consulting his watch.*]

NETTIE [*glancing at her wrist-watch*]. Lord, it's early—only a quarter of nine!

CARR. Yes—that's what I have—— [*Attacking the reason of his visit.*] Nettie? What seems to be——?

NETTIE [*in a tone of friendly confidence*]. Busy, eh?—Met, you'll be in that firm yet—you will! Layton told me—he knows I know you, see?—he told me the other night—at a certain party—that if things broke right, before the end of the next year he'd have you in with 'em.—Sure, he did!—He's crazy about you, he is.

CARR [*pleased in spite of himself*]. No kidding, Net! Did he? Is he?

NETTIE. Sure! I wouldn't kid a good pal.

CARR. Well—he sort of gave me to understand that I had made a little hit with him, H. L. did.—He's a prince, Layton.

NETTIE. He's some rapid baby with the skirts.

CARR [*uncomfortably*]. Is he? O I guess he——

NETTIE. Is he?—Huh! Ask the girls who work for him—— [*Seeing* CARR's *pained expression.*] What's the matter? What do you look like that for?

CARR. Oh, nothing. I was just thinking of something.

NETTIE. Does it hurt as much as that?—That little jazz brother of yours has got the right idea, all right. He's skipped, they say, with a high-life dame, older'n God's old dog. Is that so, Met?

CARR. Yes—damn him!—He's no good, that boy, no good on earth.—O God, don't let's talk of it! It makes me sick!

NETTIE. Oh! Let the old dame stew in her own juice! —A fat chance a girl like me's got. I'm going to go out for Number One, I am, every time. I been stung too often.

CARR [*impatiently*]. I guess a girl gets about what she asks for.

NETTIE [*smiling to herself*]. Ay-ugh! Sometimes.— Well, Old Sunshine, don't bite my head off!—Gosh, it's nice to see you sitting there in Nettie's little old rocker! —I—I've missed you, Metty.

CARR [*hastily*]. Ay-ugh?—Aggie said over the 'phone you were up against it, Nettie. What's the difficulty?

NETTIE. I'll tell you—in a minute. O I've had an awful time! Honest, I never thought I'd——

CARR [*not unkindly*]. Better spit it out right out. I've got to be on my way, you know.

NETTIE [*wistfully*]. Where you going? To celebrate?

CARR [*casually*]. No. I've got an engagement.

NETTIE. With the ice-man, I suppose.

CARR [*smiling*]. Ay-ugh.

NETTIE [*ingratiatingly*]. 'Member last New Year's, Metty?

[CARR *nods embarrassedly.* NETTIE *puts her hand on his knee.*]

CARR [*moving away*]. Say, Nettie—shoot out anything you want to tell me, and if I can be of any help, why——

NETTIE. Wasn't it fun? Out with the bunch raising Cain—and then coming home, by ourselves, just you and me, and—— O we *did* have good times together, didn't we? Playing around? [*Jumping to her feet.*] O my good Lord! What will you think of me? *What?* And me "the grand little home-maker," as you used to say. *I've never offered you a drink!* Watch Little Sister while she—— [*She runs to the table and begins to prepare the drink.*]

CARR [*emphatically, as he rises*]. I don't want a drink, Nettie. I——

NETTIE. O my Lord! I never heard such dog! Don't *want* a——

CARR. I don't! Don't fix it, not for me.

NETTIE. Why, Emmet Carr! Do you stand there and say you won't have a drink with me, Nettie, on New Year's Eve! *Pig!*

CARR [*yielding*]. Honestly, I—O well, if——

NETTIE. O well, I guess so!—Just as if I didn't know how a certain rising young lawyer didn't like his "Tom Collins." [*As she works.*] 'Member last year at this time when you looked at me with those old brown eyes of yours and said—"Net, by God, I'm going to make 'em sit up in that office!" Do you? [*As she pours the*

gin, making a stiff drink, CARR *interjects, "Easy, there!"*]

CARR [*smiling*]. Did I?—Damn cheek, eh?

NETTIE. *No!* Gosh! I'm so proud of you—— [*Going to the bathrom.*] I got a cold syphon in the bathroom—— [CARR *rises and consults his watch, moving uneasily to the fireplace, where he glances at the photographs above it.*] Is she pretty? [*Returning.*]

CARR. Who?

NETTIE. The ice-man!

CARR [*laughing in spite of himself*]. That ice-man sort of worries you, doesn't he?

NETTIE [*making a face at him and adding the syphon-water to the glasses*]. Here you are, old dear! [*As she gives the glasses.*] You! Me! Us! To old times, Metty, God bless 'em! And a Happy New Year—to us both! [*She clinks her glass on his.*]

CARR. A Happy New Year!— [*His mind on* TISHY.] A new year—A new year! [*They drink.*]

NETTIE. Not so dusty, eh?

CARR. Not so dusty!—You haven't forgotten how to stir 'em, have you?

NETTIE [*coming close to him*]. I—I haven't forgotten —anything, Metty—not even an old friend.

CARR [*with embarrassment*]. Ay-ugh—I know, Nettie. I—you see——

NETTIE [*curling up on the end of the chaise-longue*]. Don't you like me any more, Metty—a little?

CARR [*kindly*]. Oh—don't be foolish!

NETTIE [*pulling him down beside her*]. I—I've had a hellish time, lately. I've been up against it, flat. Honestly, I have. I don't s'pose that means anything to you. But—well, when a girl's been buddies with a fellow like you—O I don't know! Everything has just gone *bluey* with me lately—since you went. [*She drinks.*] God, it gets awful sometimes, don't it? Everything!

CARR. Umn!—And then again it gets awful nice.

NETTIE. I been so darned hard up, I—O gosh, sometimes a girl don't know where to turn. You gotta *live*, haven't you?—

CARR [*with a quick look at her that melts into sympathy*]. Say, Nettie—I'm not so sticky with it myself, but if you're really up against it like that—why, I guess I can——

NETTIE [*earnestly and sincerely*]. Why, bless your big old heart! Not on your life!—Do you think I——? Nix! No, sir! It's never been a question of money between us, and it's never going to be—*no, sir!*

CARR. Well, all the same, if——

NETTIE [*putting her cheek against his sleeve*]. 'Tisn't that. [*She drinks.*] Met, were you ever lonesome?—Were you?

CARR [*feelingly*]. I'll say I was!

NETTIE. Well, that's me, Met! I'm lonesome—lonesome! And it's New Year's—— [*Pause.*] Aren't you ever coming back?

CARR [*moving away and gesturing toward the table*]. You don't look very lonesome. [*His tone is joking, to avoid difficulties.*]

NETTIE [*pathetically*]. I didn't know but Aggie'd be back to help me eat supper. I haven't had mine yet. [CARR *murmurs something and looks at his watch.*] O it's just a little after nine! Finish your drink and I'll make another. [*She goes to the table and puts down her unfinished drink.*]

CARR. No—this'll do me.

[*The doorbell rings.* CARR *looks uncomfortably about him.* NETTIE *gives a smothered exclamation. The bell rings again. She goes to the door and out, closing it. While she is gone* CARR *takes his photograph from its frame on the mantel and puts it in his pocket.*]

NETTIE [*reëntering*]. It's Ag. She wants me to come up a minute. That poor fish she's living with has got the *flu* and she's scared stiff about him.

CARR. Poor Ag! She's a good little kiddie. [*Seeing escape.*] I'll tell you, Net! You go right up and I'll be on my way.

NETTIE [*slipping her arm through his*]. No, there's no such hurry as all that. I know that bird. He's just pulling another Camille. I don't see you very often and I have Ag on my neck all the time. Poor Ag! She's about on the rocks. T. B., I guess. I have to help her out—when I got anything to help with.

CARR. It's darn decent of you, Nettie, to——

NETTIE [*sincerely*]. Well, what are you going to do? Let 'em croak right in front of you? I ain't made that way. I got some money to-day—unexpectedly. I gave her a hundred bones to-night.

CARR [*with real feeling, for the first time, in his voice*]. You did! Nettie, you—you're a white woman, by George, a white woman!

NETTIE. *Me?* Ay-ugh!—— [*After a pause. Her arm on his shoulder.*] Metty? Do you know I was soppy in love with you once?—A year ago to-night?—Right here in this little old room?—Do you know that?

CARR [*in an attempt to laugh it off*]. See here, Nettie, no bunk. What's the use of——

NETTIE. I *was*.

CARR [*as kindly as possible*]. What happened between us, happened. That's all. I guess there wasn't much falling in love done—not on my part nor on yours. You and I—well, I was a man and you were a girl—and—well, you know. There wasn't any special reason why we—I guess we were both a little lonely and—you were a good pal, Nettie. I don't want you to think I don't appreciate—but—O hang it! Things change. They've got to. It's nobody's fault—it's—well—they change.

NETTIE. They change all right.—Only—O I'm a poor mutt, I am! But honest and true, Metty, there never

was a fellow I ever met—and that's going some—that—that——

CARR [*more brusquely*]. O get down to brass tacks, Nettie! What is it you want to talk to me about tonight? Anything?

NETTIE [*abruptly*]. Met? Who's your new girl?

CARR [*irritatedly*]. Look here! Do you think I came here to be asked fool questions like that?

NETTIE. O don't be so darned up-stage! You used to be able to take a joke, but now—O Gosh, look at the coffee-pot doing the Gilda Grey!—Gimme your handkerchief!—To lift it off with!—Quick! It'll be hard-boiled!—Gimmie it! [*She snatches the blue silk handkerchief* TISHY *has given him, from his pocket.*]

CARR [*jumping to recover it*]. No—here—hold on—let go of that!—If you burn——

NETTIE [*seeing that he is really angry, throws the handkerchief back*]. Aw, take your old wipe! [CARR *replaces it solicitously.*] I never did like blue anyway.—I can do it with my little old skirt. [*She lifts away the coffee-pot.*] Pull out the plug, will you? Gosh, I see I gotta learn to make handkerchiefs if I want to get a beau.

CARR [*disconnecting the plug. Significantly*]. There's more you've got to learn to forget, Nettie. You'd better begin right now.

NETTIE. Oh!—— [*Starting to retort but thinking better of it.*] You don't say!—Gee, doesn't it smell grand? Still the same old coffee-hound you use to be, are you?

CARR. Uhn-hmn.

NETTIE [*at his arm*]. Say, Met, wasn't the coffee good last New Year's Eve? O Boy! And wasn't it good the next morning? I'll tell the world!—Come on, let's have a cup now, Met. [*She thrusts her arm in his affectionately. She sees their two reflections in the glass.*] O Gee, don't we look cute in there together?—Old Darling!

CARR [*gravely but kindly disengaging himself*]. No, Nettie, no!—No. [*He leaves her and goes to the other side of the room.*]

NETTIE [*wiping away a sincere tear*]. That don't prevent you having a cup of coffee, does it? You won't lose your virtue just doing that, will you? [*He hesitates.*] Please—just this once!—It's awful to be alone on New Year's Eve. [*Coming to him pleadingly.*]

CARR [*yielding*]. O Nettie—what a girl!

NETTIE [*joyful over her victory*]. Ain't I? And that ain't the half of me, dearie! Help Little Sister with the automat, will you? [*Indicating the table.*]

[CARR *pushes the rocker away and they move the table over to the divan.*]

CARR [*touched by her loneliness and warmed by the gin*]. Oh—all right! Only hurry it up, Nettie.—*'Tisn't* much fun, being alone, is it?

NETTIE [*busied with the two coffee cups*]. Fun?—Say, it's queer some bird didn't dope out hell as a place you go to and sit all alone in, huh?—*O Gee-whiz-in-the-morning!*

CARR [*on the divan*]. Lord, what is it now?

NETTIE. O Bonehead! Fish! I got everything. Look!—Turkey and those little goo-cakes *you* like, and everything—and I forgot the cream. Damn!

CARR. O well, drink it without.

NETTIE. *Without?*—New Year's Eve?—*Nix-on-the-concertina-Lena!* I'll put my little hat and coat on, dearie, and run down to the Wop's on the corner and get some. [*He looks at his watch.*] Aw, it won't take two minutes.

CARR [*getting his hat and coat*]. No, no! I'll go—and I'll——

NETTIE [*forestalling him*]. Yes, "and I'll send it back by the boy"—that's what you're going to say, isn't it? [CARR *laughs. She seizes his overcoat.*] Well, nothing doing, old dear! You got to promise you'll come back

with it or—— Honest, Metty, I got my heart set on—— [*Doorbell rings. She goes crossly to the door.*] O Happy New Year! [*She finds* Aggie *there. They enter together.*]

Aggie [*in great distress*]. O Net! Net!

Nettie. For the Lord's sake, what is it *now?*

Carr. Hello, Aggie!

Aggie. Excuse me, Mr. Carr.—Net, I just can't do anything with him. He's crazy or something. I'm afraid of him. I tell you, I'm afraid of him. Won't you come up, won't you?

Nettie [*sitting on the chaise-longue*]. O couldn't he pick some other night to throw the monkey-wrench? You know he hates me, Ag.

Aggie. Please, Net! [*In tears.*]

Carr [*as he sees* Aggie's *distress*]. Here, here! Look here! *I'll* come up with you a minute. [*Puts his hat and coat on chair preparatory to going with* Aggie.]

Nettie. Here, take my key to let yourself in with.

Carr. No, I'll be right back.

Nettie. Go on, take it, I've got another. I'll go down to the Wop's and get the cream while you're away.— [Carr *takes her keys.*] Don't be unfaithful to me while you're gone.

Carr [*laughing in spite of himself*]. You go to the devil!

[*He and* Aggie *leave.* Nettie *glances in the mirror in disgust. She decides on a fresh move.*]

Nettie. Cream nothing. [*Rapidly she puts out the ceiling light, starts the phonograph, and flies into her bedroom, where she gets out of her dress and into a very alluring—to her at least—negligée of brilliant orange silk, calculated to display her charms to the utmost. She turns to the dressing-table for a hasty but vivid dash of make-up. The doorbell rings.* Nettie *goes to open the door impatiently, calling out before she reaches it.*] You poor fish! Anybody'd think you'd never unlocked that

door before. [*She opens the door and is confronted by* TISHY.] Oh!—Lord!—Well—well, pardon *me!* I thought it was a friend of mine coming back to supper.—Well, what is it? [*They enter,* NETTIE *in advance.*] Income Tax—or Birth Control?

TISHY. Are you—is this Miss Le Noire?

NETTIE. Yes.

TISHY. I—I should like to speak to you—[*She looks about her and sees that the room is empty.*]—if I may.

NETTIE [*doubtfully*]. Well—I don't know—I—you see—my friend has just run upstairs a minute and——

TISHY. I'll try not to detain you very long. I—I——

NETTIE [*with professional elegance*]. If it's about getting your nails done, I might as well tell you now that I couldn't possibly——

TISHY. O no!

NETTIE. Possibly oblige any clients this evening. New Year's and all. Oh, no, indeed!

TISHY. No, it isn't about that. It—it is about something else.

NETTIE. Oh? [TISHY *looks helplessly at the noisy victrola.*] It does make you holler, doesn't it? [*She stops the machine and puts* CARR'S *hat and coat on the bed.*] I'm nutty about music, aren't you?—Will you sit down?

TISHY. Thank you, I—perhaps—— [*She sits on the edge of the offered chair.*]

NETTIE [*sitting on the chaise longue. After a pause*]. Well—excuse me, I don't want to seem to hurry you—but what did you want to see me about, Miss?

TISHY [*with difficulty*]. It's a—it's a little difficult to put into words. I came—Miss Le Noire, circumstances—not very pleasant ones—have made it necessary for me to come here to-night—to—to—— [*She pauses.*]

NETTIE [*brusquely*]. Say—you seem to know me all right—but honestly I don't know you, not from Adam.

Did some one send you here?—If it's anything to do with saving my soul or anything like that, you needn't bother to go on—because I don't want to be saved, not on New Year's Eve.

TISHY. It is that that I have to explain—my reason for being here. I—I ought to tell you that my name is Letitia Tevis—I——

NETTIE [*giving* TISHY *a sharp, penetrating glance, then after a short pause, coolly*]. Well, Miss Tevis, what can I do for you?

TISHY. Miss Le Noire—I—My coming here to-night has not been very—very easy for me. I—you must believe me when I say that only the most imperative necessity has forced me to—to—to—— Please, please, understand that, won't you?

NETTIE. Say? Are you sure it's me you want to see?

TISHY. I want to see Miss Le Noire.

NETTIE. Well, that's me, all right. But—Say? How'd you know where I lived?

TISHY [*evasively*]. I was given your address.

NETTIE. Oh! You were?—Might I ask by who?

TISHY [*reluctantly*]. By a lady. A client of yours, I believe.

NETTIE. Well, if you don't mind, I guess I'll have to ask you her name.

TISHY. It is a—Mrs. Stutts.

NETTIE [*scenting trouble*]. Oh! Her?—I see.—Well, here I am—and here you are. So if you'll explain——

TISHY. Miss Le Noire—I have come to throw myself on your generosity. To appeal to you. I am facing a pretty difficult situation. You can help me. I—I want you to help me.

NETTIE [*crisply*]. Well, of course, if I had the slightest idea of what you're talking about, Miss—Tevis, you said?—I might be able to——

TISHY. It—it is about my father.

NETTIE. Your *father?*—Well, for goodness' sakes!

I never had a lady consult me about her *father* before.

TISHY. Yes—my father. You know him, I think.

NETTIE [*wearily*]. I know quite a lot of fathers—I guess most people do—but— [*crossly*] why should I know *your* father?

TISHY. My father is Mr. Adolph Tevis.—You were with him this afternoon—in the Palace Hotel—weren't you? I think you have been there with him before, though that doesn't matter.

NETTIE. O don't it? Thank you!—You seem to know a good deal about my business.

TISHY [*earnestly*]. It isn't because it's your business that I'm talking of it. It's because, in this case, it happens to be *my* business.

NETTIE [*insolently*]. Well, what if I was at the Palace to-day? What of it? Maybe I do know your father. I know Grant's Tomb and the Woolworth Building and Jack Dempsey—but what of it? What of it?

TISHY [*coldly*]. It is just that—that's the reason for my coming here.

NETTIE [*rising and looking at her watch*]. Well, you'll have to excuse me, I'm afraid——

TISHY. I am afraid you will have to listen. [NETTIE *sits.*] Miss Le Noire, I have to earn my living—I am, or was till recently, in Layton & Gray's law-office——

NETTIE [*with a swift look*]. O-o-oh! *Were* you?

TISHY. My people lost their money—some time ago—when I was a child. I have a father and a mother who are dependent on me, who are old, in ill health, unable to keep themselves; our circumstances are straitened, very; we have only what I earn—and just now I am out of employment—only what I earn and a very small amount of money yearly, left us by an aunt—I'm sorry to bore you with all this, but I have to tell it in order to make things quite clear to you why——

NETTIE. Layton & Gray's, you say?—Do you know a fellow down there named Carr?

TISHY. Yes.—In order to make it quite clear to you——

NETTIE. He's a great friend of mine—a great friend.

TISHY. Please!—I have to count every penny—every penny—I want you to believe this.—To-day we received a part of our little money, the half of it—five hundred dollars. My father cashed the check at the bank—and he——

NETTIE [*rising*]. Excuse me, Miss Tevis, but I gotta tell you my friend will be here any minute—and if you're getting round to borrow money of me, as you seem to be, I might as well tell you now that I am not in a position to—— [*Gesture.*]

TISHY [*flushing*]. Oh! How can you speak like that? [*She rises.*]

NETTIE. I'm sorry you're up against it, as you *say* you are—but I don't see why you should come down here to my flat and spill it all over me. It's not my notion of a pleasant New Year's Eve.

TISHY. No, nor mine.

NETTIE. Well?

TISHY. Miss Le Noire—the money my father cashed to-day he gave to you. I know that.

NETTIE [*threateningly*]. What do you mean—gave to me?

TISHY. He gave it to you. I don't know why—I don't want to know why. He is an old man, a very broken, unfortunate, old man—and—and not—not quite responsible very often—for what he does—not quite—O you must have *seen* that!—Miss Le Noire, I am going to ask you—for my mother's sake, for my father's sake—not for mine—to keep them from actual want, I ask you to—to give me back the money my—my father gave you this afternoon.

NETTIE. I don't care if you're asking it for the Lord on High! You can't come here and insult me right in

my own house. I want you to get out of here. I want you to get out of this room!

TISHY. I'm not going to leave here, until I have that money——

NETTIE. We'll see abou——

TISHY. I'm not insulting you—I'm not accusing you of—of anything.—All I am doing is to try to show you, to make you feel how—how—Miss Le Noire, you *must* give that money back. You *must!*

NETTIE [*lashing herself to a rage*]. I don't know how you dare say such things! I don't know how you dare! *You?* Who are *you?* Who *are* you, anyway? What do I know about you, or your sob-story? Just because you pretend to be a lady—I suppose that's what you do!—with a ga-ga old father, "not quite responsible"—he's *rotten!* [TISHY *interrupts with*: "*Stop, Miss Le Noire!*"] I'll say he's *rotten!*—and because a nasty, bleach-haired, gossiping old bootlegger's *kept woman* comes to you and tells you she happened to see me say "Hello" to your lovely father, you come crashing down here to me—*me*—a girl who works a darned sight harder than you do to get along—to me, who's just as good as you are, yes, just as good—and accuse me of *stealing* —sure, that's what it amounts to!—*Me!*—Because you think I'm not your class. That's why you try it on!—Well, Miss Tevis, let me tell you one thing, and let me tell you straight, I can sue you—sue you for defamation of character. You better be sure next time you and your father get into trouble that you know who it is you're trying to hang your dirty work on to!—*You get out of here!*

TISHY [*angrily*]. Oh! How dare you speak to me like that? How dare you? I won't leave this room I tell you—not till you give me that money!

[*The outer door opens and* CARR'S *voice is heard cheerfully.*]

CARR. Nettie!—Nettie!

NETTIE. Hello, darling!

[TISHY *is turned to stone at the sound.*]

CARR. There's nothing the matter with that fellow. He only wanted a drink. Did you get your old cream? [*He comes gayly into the room but stops stock still, the words faltering on his lips, as he sees* TISHY. *She is motionless, expressionless.* NETTIE *looks from one to the other, uncertain of what will happen. The pause is long and tense. At last, as he suddenly realizes the position in which he appears.*] O my God! [*Dropping the keys he holds.*]

NETTIE [*with an air of affectionate reproach*]. You've been gone long enough, old dear.

CARR [*disregarding her*]. Tishy—what—what are you doing here?

TISH [*like ice*]. I—I need hardly ask that of you.

NETTIE. Is there any reason why he shouldn't be here, I'd like to know? He's a very old and very dear friend of mine, Emmet is. Aren't you, Emmet?

[CARR's *eyes are imploringly, miserably, desperately on* TISHY.]

CARR. Tishy——

NETTIE. He's having a little supper here with me, that's what he's doing here.

CARR [*beginning to lose his head*]. That's a lie!—— Tishy, that's not true! I'm *not* having supper with her!

TISHY [*wearily*]. Is there any reason why you shouldn't, if you choose to?

NETTIE. What do you mean—that's a lie? [*Half sobbing for effect and unconsciously eating a piece of turkey.*] That's a fine way to act to a girl, that is! Tell *me* I lie. O my God!

CARR [*in anguish. He talks through* NETTIE *to* TISHY]. Tishy—Don't listen to what she says—It's all a mistake—Tishy—She asked me to come here to-night because she was in trouble, to—O won't you listen to me,

Tishy?—I know you think I'm—I don't blame you—but if you'll only let me explain—please—please!

TISHY [*talking through* NETTIE *to* CARR]. Explain? O not that, not that—anything but that—anything but explanations——

CARR. But you've *got* to listen—I've got to explain—explain why I'm here.—It—it isn't—if you'll just let me——

NETTIE. Yes—let him explain—explain that I was good enough for him once——

CARR. Be quiet!

TISHY [*in cold scorn*]. What does it matter to me where you go? You have a perfect right, haven't you, to—to choose your—your diversions? I don't know why you feel that what you call explanations are necessary. I don't ask—I don't want them.

CARR. But you—my being here——

TISHY. Isn't it enough that you *are* here?

NETTIE. Ay-ugh—tell her! Tell her you're a good boy. She'll believe you—I don't think!

CARR [*to* NETTIE]. For God's sake, keep quiet. [*Going to* TISHY *and putting his hand on her arm. With all his heart.*] Come away, Tishy—come away with me——

TISHY. Don't touch me! Don't dare to touch me!

CARR [*very humbly*]. I won't—I won't, Tishy—but, oh, if you've got any pity,—any—Why it's only common justice to hear me—you wouldn't treat me like that—you mustn't—Tishy—it isn't like you—it isn't *like* you! Tishy, won't you come away from here? [*He takes a step toward the door, his eyes on her pleadingly.*]

NETTIE [*running up to the door and intercepting him*]. She ain't going—not yet she ain't going—not till I tell her, she ain't! [*To* TISHY.] Listen—listen to me!—I'm going to tell you!—He and I used to be lovers——

CARR. Tishy—for God's sake—come away!

NETTIE. Lovers—and he came here to-night again—and he got caught—by his girl—and now he's trying to

short-skate out of it—that's the kind of fellow he is!—Judas!—*Judas!*—That's what he is!

CARR. Tishy—you won't believe that—you can't believe that—you— } TOGETHER

NETTIE [*sobbing*]. Judas—Judas Carr! }

CARR. Tishy, listen to me—listen to me! —She's lying—she's lying, I tell you she's lying!—O won't you come away from here? } TOGETHER

TISHY. O stop—stop! }

CARR. It's horrible—horrible—everything I say—everything I do—*here!* It's all against me—but if you'll only come away with me—somewhere—anywhere—

NETTIE. Four-flusher!

CARR. O don't look at me like that, Tishy!—If you'll only come out of this awful place—where we'll be alone—where it's quiet—where it's clean—then I can tell you—and then you'll know—then you can do as you think best. Tishy—this is everything to me—my life—my whole life—everything I've hoped for—prayed for. *I'm not going to lose it like this!*

NETTIE. Piker!——

CARR. Tishy—listen—believe!

TISHY [*desperately*]. Listen—believe? Oh!—oh!—If I listened all my life, would that help any? Help this? What does anything you—or I—or she—can say help now? Can't you see that everything is— [*she chokes*]—is—done for—done for! [*She tries to get away but* CARR *intercepts her.*]

CARR. Tishy—you're killing me!

TISHY. You—you killed me! [*She tries to go but he bars the way.*]

CARR. Don't say that—I can't bear it—— [*Trying to hold her.*] Come with me, Tishy——

TISHY [*snatching away from him*]. Let me go! Let me go! Don't you understand—must I say *that*, too? Don't you understand that I never want to see you again? —Never!

CARR. You mean that?

NETTIE. Then go—then go!—What you staying for? [*She giggles hysterically.*] Do you think you're going to be invited to supper, too?

CARR [*blocking* TISHY'S *way*]. No—you're not going!—Do you mean that? *Never?*

} TOGETHER

TISHY. Yes—yes—I mean it! *Never!*—Let me go!

CARR [*wildly, at the door*]. No—you're not going—not yet.— [*To* NETTIE.] You've done this! You've done this! By God, you're going to pay for it, too! You planned all this. That's why you got me here, you and your Aggie! That's why you— [*To* TISHY.] That's it, isn't it? Why *you're* here! What *you're* doing here? [*To* NETTIE.] How'd you *get* her here? She wouldn't come here herself—she wouldn't come here to—to *you!* You planned it somehow—God knows how! You lied to *her,* too—you——

NETTIE. I didn't—I didn't—I didn't—I——

CARR. You did! Do you think *she—she'd* be here otherwise? *She*—in *your* filthy, slimy——

TISHY. O stop! O stop!—O please stop!

NETTIE [*terrified*]. Metty—my God—listen! I *never* got her here—I *never* got her here—I've never *seen* her before——

CARR. That's a lie!

NETTIE. I didn't—I didn't—[*To* TISHY.] *You!* You're his girl!—You—*you!*—Tell him! Tell him!

TISHY. She—she's right.

NETTIE. There!

TISHY. I—I came here of my own free will.

CARR. Came—*here?* What *for,* then—what *for?* [TISHY *looks straight at* NETTIE *in silence.*] What *for?*

TISHY. It—it doesn't matter now what for.

CARR [*taking her arm*]. Tell me what you're here for?

TISHY. Let me go! How dare you question me—*you?*

How *dare* you?—Ask her! Ask your friend! Ask that woman why I'm here. She'll tell you. Then you'll know. That's the only part of the whole beautiful story you've missed. Ask *her!* [*She pushes past him hysterically and out.*]

[*The outer door slams.* CARR *turns to* NETTIE, who *stands with her hands on her hips, looking at him insolently, trying to hide her apprehension.*]

NETTIE. Well, she's gone—your girl's gone. Ain't she?

[CARR *stands motionless with a terrifying look in his eyes. With an affectation of indifference* NETTIE *goes to the victrola and starts "Yes! We Have No Bananas."*]

NETTIE. Well—she's gone.—What are you going to do now?

CARR [*in a low voice—approaching her slowly, his fists clenched*]. I—I—don't—know—but—but I think—I'm going to kill you—— [NETTIE *backs away in terror as he advances.*] I think—I'm going to kill you——

NETTIE [*in a little fearful voice*]. No, Metty—No, Metty—I—I didn't mean to—I——

[CARR *makes a sudden movement forward and seizes her. With her head in both hands he pushes her slowly against the wall.*]

CARR [*about to choke her.*] You beast—you little beast—you dirty little beast— [*For a long moment he holds her there—* NETTIE *is hypnotized by her fear. Suddenly he lets her go—pushes her away—and begins to laugh.*] O my God!—O my God!—O my God!—"Good luck—have thou—with thine honor!"—*O Christ! Stop that music!* [*All at once he breaks down and drops by the table; buries his head among the remains of the supper and sobs his heart out.* NETTIE *stares at him in distress, amazement, pity.*]

NETTIE [*weakly*]. This is a hell of a New Year's party, this is.

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE: *The same evening—sometime after eleven—in the Tevis sitting room.*

TISHY *in a stage of moral, mental and physical collapse, is just returning from her disastrous visit to* NETTIE DARK. *The hopelessness of extricating the family from the desperate situation they find themselves in, coupled with her discovery of* CARR *at* NETTIE'S, *gives a grim face to the New Year just breaking, the sounds of which are heard intermittently in the street.*

The curtain rises on an empty room. The only light there is comes from the shaded lamp on the table.

After a moment TISHY *appears at the door in hat and coat. Her face shows only too plainly the anguish of her mind, an anguish which as yet has not had the relief of tears. She stands for a moment looking vaguely about her. Since the room is empty and she can be alone, she enters.*

She takes off her hat and coat. As she turns, the sight of the two wreaths on the doors brings back the scene a few hours ago when she and CARR *put them there. With a smothered "Oh!" she throws herself down on the sofa, burying her face in the cushions. Though her body is racked no tears come.*

As she lies there prone, MRS. TEVIS *emerges from her bedroom. She has been asleep and is at present in her nightdress and wrapper, her hair wound into a hasty knot. Her manner is that of one still under the effects of an obliterating slumber.*

MRS. TEVIS. Is that you? What are you doing there? —What time is it? [TISHY *does not answer.*] How long

have I been asleep? [*No answer.*] Darling Tishy, how can you treat your own mother like this! [*No answer.*] Are you ill?—O my God! What's been happening?—Where is your father? [*She starts toward the dining-room.*] *Adolph?*—Where is he?—*Adolph?*

TISHY [*looking up*]. Why don't you go back to bed?

MRS. TEVIS. *Bed?* At a time like this? Where is he? [*Calling.*] Adolph! [*There is a sound of groaning beyond the dining-room door which is open.*] *What's that?* [*She runs out to the kitchen*]. Adolph! Adolph!—Tishy! Tishy! *He's trying to kill himself! Tishy!*

TISHY [*at the end of her rope*]. Oh! Hasn't he done enough for one day? [*She goes slowly into the dining room.*]

[*The voices of* TEVIS *and* MRS. TEVIS *and* TISHY *are heard in violent snatches together.*]

MRS. TEVIS. Adolph!—Put that knife down!—Give it to me!—Give it to me, you wretched man!

TEVIS. Go way—let me end it—no, no—I want to end it—then you'll be happy—I *will* do it—I *will* do it——

TISHY. Father!—Give me that knife!—Give it to me!—Shut that window!—Stop this—stop it at once—Mother—let him alone—he won't do it—he won't do it—Mother, *no!*—You *mustn't faint—you mustn't!*

[TISHY *re-enters half carrying, half dragging her mother.*]

MRS. TEVIS [*moaning*]. He had the bread-knife—at his throat—O your poor father!—The bread-knife—it's so dull you can't cut anything with it—And I tried to snatch it—Don't leave him alone—don't leave him alone—your poor father!

TISHY [*wearily*]. Mother—he won't do it—he doesn't dare!— [*She gets* MRS. TEVIS *into the room and to the sofa where she sits moaning*: "*Suicide! Suicide!*"] Mother, don't excite yourself like this. You'll only be ill.—I'm going to give you the rest of the sleeping powder. [*She gets the powder from the bookcase.*]

MRS. TEVIS. Don't excite myself!—Tishy Tevis, have you no heart!—Your own father? Kill himself—in this wretched little flat! The only thing that we haven't had yet is a suicide. *Il ne manque que ça!*

TISHY [*going for a glass of water from the dining room*]. It's only to get sympathy—can't you see, mother?

MRS. TEVIS [*breaking down*]. Why—why did I ever marry Tevis? Why didn't I listen to my sister? "Josephine," she said, "you mark my words, you'll live to regret it!" And, O my God, I have! "He's just a handsome, low-born, good-for-nothing," she said. But I would have him. I couldn't get to the altar fast enough. And all the time, I knew—I felt—like a warning voice within me: "Josephine, you're going to suffer." O if I'd only listened!——

TISHY [*ready with the powder*]. Here, mother—take this.

MRS. TEVIS. I don't want it! [*She takes it.*] O what I've gone through with him! And when they talked of divorce to me, I said, "No! No! A thousand times no! The Lees don't divorce," I said. I stood by him—and by my child——

TISHY. Mother, don't begin all that again, please——

MRS. TEVIS. And when you see me at last in the poorhouse in those dreadful garments the inmates have to wear—when you see me there, Tishy darling, I implore you to remember my life, and the horror of it, and all because I married a man beneath me.

TISHY. Yes, dear, I know—I know. Come—I'll help you. [*Trying to get her up.*] You must go to bed.

MRS. TEVIS. I don't want to go to bed!—What did you go up there to that woman for?—Are you aware that I am speaking to you? What did you go up there for I say?

TISHY. I—I went to ask her who it was—the woman—with him.

Mrs. Tevis. O Mon Dieu! A *Lee* forced to ask that of a bootlegger's wife!—Well?

Tishy [*lying as bravely as she can*]. It—it was Mrs. Stutts's peculiar notion of humor—saying what she did.—She saw him talking for a moment, on the corner, talking to that girl who is at the telephone downstairs—evenings. That's all.

Mrs. Tevis. Thank God!—You're not hiding anything from me, are you?—I tell you, Tishy, if your father's begun it again I—After all he's my husband, isn't he?

Tishy. Yes—he's your husband. Come, mother.

Mrs. Tevis [*struggling to her feet*]. Then you *believe* he lost it? That his pocket was picked? *Do you?*

Tishy [*putting her arms about her to support her*]. I suppose so.

Mrs. Tevis [*as* Tishy *tries to get her into her room*]. What are we going to do? *Do?* Now the money is gone? Is that torn, that piece there in the front of your waist?

Tishy. I don't know—yes—Come——

Mrs. Tevis. Oh, well—perhaps you can embroider a little rose on it or something—— [*As she goes into the bedroom.*] If that abandoned cousin of yours hadn't run off with the brother of that Carr you seem to fancy so much, we might have borrowed something from her to——

Tishy. Mother! Don't! [*She shuts the door.*]

[Tevis *appears furtively at the dining-room door. He puts his head in, and then at last furtively enters. All his debonair graces, his affectation of sprightliness, are gone. He is like a whipped dog.—He wears a faded old dressing-gown* (*once gorgeous*), *a silk handkerchief about his neck, and slippers. His shirt is widely open at the throat, the silk handkerchief dangling. His manner is at once abject, cringing, and rather theatrically defiant. He is shivering, his eye nervously on the bedroom door. He goes to the sofa and sits.* Tishy *comes back. Giving*

him a hopeless glance, she moves wearily about the room, preparatory to putting out the lights for the night. TEVIS *watches her, eager for some sign of sympathy or forgiveness.*]

TISHY [*unemotionally*]. You'd better go to bed. [*He snivels.*] You'd better go to bed. [*She goes to put out the light in kitchen. Re-entering she puts the box of sleeping powders back on the bookcase.*]

TEVIS. Even our Lord had pity—He had pity—pity for—for—— [*He stumbles over the word.*]

TISHY [*without emotion*]. Yes—He had pity.

TEVIS [*she does not heed him, as he rambles on*]. I've been sitting in the kitchen—with the window open—my shirt open—and the cruel cold like knives—cutting into my heart—knives of death——

TISHY. I'm going to put the light out.—Come.

TEVIS [*gesturing toward the bedroom miserably*]. No—no—she talks—talks—talks——

TISHY. I've given her a powder. She'll be asleep soon. —Come.

TEVIS [*in a weak outburst*]. I wish to God she'd sleep forever.

TISHY [*at the lamp*]. Come—I'm waiting——

TEVIS [*cringingly. Coming down to her*]. Tishy?——

TISHY. Well?

TEVIS [*beset to ask, yet fearful*]. Tishy—My Lamb! My little lamb! My little White Flower!—You—you *didn't*, did you? Tell your heart-broken old Daddy you didn't!

TISHY. Didn't? What?

TEVIS [*with difficulty*]. Go!—There!—Down there!

TISHY. Yes—I went.

TEVIS. I can't bear it—I can't bear that! [*Sitting by the table.*]

TISHY [*dispassionately*]. You? *You* can't bear it?

TEVIS [*sincere now in his anguish*]. *My* daughter—*my* daughter——

TISHY. And *my* father. [*She watches his distress for a long moment.*] Well—you were right. It was too late. The money is gone!

TEVIS [*groaning*]. Oh! oh! [*clinging to her dress*] Tishy—My Baby—I didn't mean to do it—I didn't mean to——

TISHY [*in a revulsion of disgust*]. Father—Don't—don't——

TEVIS. Don't tell *her*—don't tell your mother—You haven't told her, have you?—You won't tell her, will you?

TISHY. No,—No—I won't tell her.

TEVIS. You've been good to me—always—but she—I've always been afraid of her—I wasn't her sort—O I loved her once—she was so beautiful and beyond me—like a star—and afterwards, beyond, always beyond!—God, how they treated me, her lot!—What's a man to do, married to the Social Register?—When I—I made my little mistakes, my little peccadillos, what *was* she? She was a glacier—she was the *Mère de Glace*, that woman! O why didn't she let me *go*—let me go?

TISHY [*goaded to retort*]. Why didn't you go? Why didn't you go? You stayed, didn't you? Even after you stopped loving her, you stayed. You were a coward, weren't you? You've always been a coward. To-night with your talk of suicide—Oh!—Yes, I went to her—I went there—and while I was there—I—I—found out that the man who had told me only today he loved me—that he and the woman you were with this afternoon, had been —Oh!— Ever since I was a child I've had the shame of something dreadful around me. Scandals with—women, talked of and whispered about, before me, by the servants. —Then the money gone, the house gone, friends gone—gone.— And those ghastly, ghastly years—wandering penniless about Europe—with terrible déclassés men and women—O you know what our life was there—what yours was!—Perhaps I don't understand. Perhaps there's something wrong with *me*. Everything I touch seems

pitch.—O isn't there *anything* clean, *anywhere?*—Girls, girls like me, who try to live decently, to—to—Aren't there men who try to live that way, too?—Perhaps it's the way you're born—perhaps you can't help it, being decent or being rotten. I don't know. All I know is that I'm sick—sick—sick—of this horrible life I'm living! [Tevis *bursts into tears again.*] O don't cry—it's too late for that.

Tevis. Tishy—don't hate me—don't hate me—don't hate me——

Tishy [*miserably*]. Hate you? Oh Daddy, would that help any?—I've borne things and borne things and borne things, but— [*faltering*] but—I can't bear much more—I don't—know—what—I'm going—to do! [Tevis *has sunk into his chair, his head in his hands, for once silent, deeply ashamed. There is a long pause, broken at last by* Tishy, *sadly.*] There isn't much good talking, is there? Come, you must go to bed—— [*She stands for a moment looking at him, half despairingly, half pityingly. Gently.*] Well, we'll just have to begin again, Daddy—go on, somehow—that's all—— [*Exit.*]

Tevis, *as much as his enfeebled will and habitually uncontrolled impulses permit, is genuinely affected by what* Tishy *has just said to him. As he sits huddled wretchedly in his chair all sorts of passionate, vain resolves for reform run emotionally through his brain, the trend of which one gets in his uttered phrases.*]

Tevis. Lord God—Pity!—Pity, Lord God!—"Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."— [*Distant chimes ring out a little New Year's tune.*]—The New Year—the New Life——

[*As is usual with types like* Tevis, *the expression of repentance seems to perform immediately the desired miracle. He rises, already consoled and buoyed by his emotional utterances, looking about him with a less abject mien. He turns to his bedroom door. The doorbell rings. He listens to see if* Tishy *has heard. The bell*

rings again. TEVIS *goes to the door.* CARR *and* NETTIE, *his hand on her arm firmly, confront him.*]

TEVIS [*aghast*]. Mr. Carr! Mr. Carr!

CARR. Mr. Tevis, is Tishy here? Is she? I want to see her, I must see her.

TEVIS. Mr. Carr, Mr. Carr.—I—I——

CARR. I must see Tishy. Do you hear?

TEVIS [*in terror at the awful possibilities before him now*]. But—but—Good God, Mr. Carr!—What is the meaning of this? What——

[NETTIE *looks on in sullen wrath, cowed by her recent experience with* CARR, *who has dragged her here by main force it would appear.*]

CARR. Mr. Tevis! Where is your daughter?

TEVIS [*feebly, in the greatest fear lest* MRS. TEVIS *will overhear them and enter*]. Sir—Sir—What do you mean by this? A man's home, sir—his—his castle—his—this lady—*here*——

NETTIE. Let go my arm, will you? It's black-and-blue already with your pulling and hauling. [*To* TEVIS.] Yes it's "the little love bird"—— [TEVIS *groans.*]

CARR. Mr. Tevis!—I've got to see Tishy. I've got to see her. It means everything. Please take my word for it and please call her immediately.

TEVIS. For Heaven's sake don't shout! Don't! My wife—my wife—she—— [*He gestures helplessly.*] What are you here for?

CARR [*lowering his voice*]. I want to see Tishy. I will see her!

TEVIS. My daughter is out, sir. She is *out.* You can't see her. No, sir! This is an outrage, an outrage——

CARR. You're not telling the truth. I'll call her! [*He moves towards* MRS. TEVIS's *bedroom.*]

TEVIS. No, sir! No! No! Leave my house!

NETTIE [*contemptuously*]. Huh! All we want now is paper snow and a male quartette.

CARR. Now listen, Mr. Tevis!

MRS. TEVIS [*from her bedroom*]. Adolph!

TEVIS [*distracted*]. Oh, dear, oh, dear, she's coming out! Go, go, Mr. Carr! Take this lady away.—In the hall. I'll talk to you in the hall! I——

MRS. TEVIS. Adolph! Adolph!

TEVIS. Yes, Josie, my love.

MRS. TEVIS. Adolph, who is out there?

TEVIS. Who? Who, my dear?

MRS. TEVIS. Who is it?

TEVIS. It's—it's—Go to sleep my dear, go to sleep.—It's Mr. Carr, Josie, and—and a friend. Come to wish Tishy a Happy New Year.

NETTIE [*sullenly*]. I'll say we have.

MRS. TEVIS. Tell them to go away!

TEVIS. Yes, dear, at once.

CARR. Mr. Tevis, I . . .

TEVIS. In the hall! For God's sake, in the hall!

[*The doorbell rings again.* TEVIS *listens to the sound with anguish, fearful of some new pitfall. It rings again joyously.* TEVIS *drags himself to the outer door.*]

NETTIE [*to* CARR]. Well, you're getting on fine, aren't you?

CARR. Keep still!

TEVIS [*as he opens the door and perceives the visitor*]. Mrs. Stutts!

MRS. STUTTS [*hilariously*]. Well, Mr. Tevis, Happy New Year! If it isn't too soon to wish it. [*She carries a bottle of wine, tied with a bow of red ribbon. She enters vivaciously.*]

TEVIS [*in agony*]. Shh, please, shhh——!

MRS. STUTTS [*lowering her voice*]. I just told Ed, "I'm just going downstairs," I said, "and take a bottle of that real honest-to-God port wine," I said, "to—" [TEVIS *still feebly tries to hold her back, but she advances till she takes in* CARR *and* NETTIE.] Oh!—Well, I——

NETTIE [*viciously*]. Hah! You brought me to a New

Year's party, Met. It's the bootlegger's female mate.

Mrs. Stutts. You horrid girl, you! You never could manicure anyway!

Nettie [*springing to the attack*]. Why, you old——

Carr [*to* Nettie]. Stop this! [*To* Mrs. Stutts.] And you, too.—Mr. Tevis, will you ask this lady to go, please?

Mrs. Stutts. How dare you speak to me! Mr. Tevis, I appeal to you! Are you going to stand for my being insulted right before you in your own house? Are you?

Tevis. Madame, I'm horrified—I regret—I deplore—I——

Nettie [*to* Mrs. Stutts]. Huh! You needn't bother to pin any lilies of the valley on yourself. I got a lot of other things on you and you know it.

Mrs. Stutts. The woman's drunk or crazy or both.

Carr [*to* Tevis]. Will you get her out of here?—Mr. Tevis!—If not——

Tevis [*in complete despair*]. Please—Please—My wife—my wife——

Mrs. Stutts [*to* Nettie]. You! You think I didn't see you today carrying on with him? [*Indicating* Tevis.] And——

Nettie [*giggling*]. Did you? Well, I didn't have a bottle with a red bow on it.

Tevis. Mrs. Stutts—For God's sake! Go!—I—my wife—my wife—she——

Mrs. Stutts [*in full swing*]. Carrying on and—and—You ought to be ashamed of yourself—an old thing like him! And his own daughter coming up to me, and "Who is she?" she says. And I told her. Just as any decent woman *would* do.—I don't know what she did to him, Mr. Carr, but it wasn't anything pretty, I promise you that. I know her. And I don't pretend to judge others—far be it from me! But I got to tell you I don't congratulate you on your choice of lady friends!

CARR [*getting the drift of things*]. Listen to me, Mrs. —Mrs.——?

MRS. STUTTS. Stutts.

CARR. You say Miss Tevis came to you for—for *her* address? I want the truth.

TEVIS [*moaning*]. I won't have this!—Leave my house! All of you!

MRS. STUTTS. Yes, she did!—she—*her*—was with him to-day—at the Palace—with this old ape here. [*To* TEVIS.] Don't you pull my arm! [*She slaps* TEVIS's *restraining hand. To* NETTIE.] And you can't deny it! —She prob'ly stole his money—that's what they do, her kind. *Stole* it!

NETTIE. *Me?—You—!*

MRS. STUTTS. Manicure!

CARR [*to* NETTIE]. So that's it, is it? Now I'm beginning to see. That's what I haven't been able to get out of you so far.—Mr. Tevis, is this true, what that lady——

NETTIE. Lady!

CARR. —there is saying? That you were with Miss Dark today? That she took money from you?

TEVIS. You insolent young——!

CARR [*vigorously*]. That's all right, Mr. Tevis—we've gone way beyond the name-calling stage now.—Is it true what she——?

MRS. STUTTS. "*Is it true?*" Look at him!

[TEVIS *is shaking with rage and humiliation and apprehension.*]

CARR [*to* TEVIS]. *Is* it? Answer!

TEVIS [*ready to collapse*]. *Cochon!*—Go away!

CARR [*to* NETTIE]. Here! *You!*
TEVIS. Leeches—leeches—— } TOGETHER

CARR [*to* NETTIE]. Why was Miss Tevis at your house tonight? Out with it! What *is* it between you and *him* that brought her there?

NETTIE [*blazing*]. O God, I'm sick of this! What

right have you got, all of you, sticking your noses in my business?—I'll tell you—yes, I'll tell you! This old baboon—he's been hanging 'round me every chance he got—the dirty old thing! And I was hard-up—I been hard-up—just because I was trying to keep straight——

MRS. STUTTS. Ha!

NETTIE. O I *was!*—Do you think I'd let that Old Cream-Puff touch me?—And he come 'round today—with his pockets full of it—and I hadn't a cent and it was New Year's— [*choking back a sob*] and—Why shouldn't I take it? Why shouldn't any girl take what she can get from rotten old things like him? 'Tisn't *us.* It's him and *his* kind that makes all the trouble!

MRS. STUTTS [*in triumph*]. There you are, Mr. Carr! You've heard her—you've——

CARR [*going to the door and opening it*]. Mrs. Stutts—the best thing for you is to—— [*Gesturing at the door.*]

MRS. STUTTS. Why, you—I just come down to—I—you——

CARR [*commandingly*]. Go home—at once! Mrs. Stutts! Go home!

MRS. STUTTS [*indignantly and tearfully*]. Treat me like this—New Year's Eve—a little bottle of port wine—*Ed! Ed!* [*And she departs.*]

[CARR *shuts the door on her and turns back furiously to* NETTIE].

CARR. So you're *that*, too, eh?—a common grafter?—Well, you've got to give it back!

NETTIE. Back—you get it back if you can!

TISHY [*entering from the dining-room. Trembling with anger but keeping her voice in control*]. Mr. Carr—what do you mean by this?

CARR. Tishy, I've found out about this thing at last. I'm going to settle it.

TISHY. Father?—What is all this? [*To* CARR.] What are you doing here—with *her?*

TEVIS [*collapsing*]. Send them away, Tishy—they're driving me mad—mad—Leeches—Informers—*Canaille*—

TISHY. You've no right to be here—My mother is ill—my father, too.—Shouting, screaming like this.—I want you to go.

CARR. Tishy—I've got to speak to you——

TISHY. I want you to go!

CARR. Tishy!

[MRS. TEVIS' *voice is heard calling: "Tishy!—Adolph!"*]

TISHY [*who now takes command of the situation*]. Father, mother is calling—I want you to go to your room.

TEVIS. I wish I could go to my grave!

[MRS. TEVIS *calls: "Adolph"! hesitates, then unable to resist Tishy's authority and moved by the fear of seeing his wife join them, he stumbles into his bedroom.*]

TISHY [*to* CARR]. Why you should have thought—why you should have subjected me to—to this—I—I—The kindest thing you can do for me now, Mr. Carr, is to leave this room.

CARR [*stubbornly*]. I'm not going.

TISHY [*turning away*]. Then you force me to go.

CARR. Not till you've heard what she has to tell you.

TISHY. I refuse to listen.

CARR. You're going to hear.

NETTIE. Met, lemme give you a tip—she isn't worth it.

TISHY [*her eyes flashing*]. Will you leave this room?

CARR [*earnestly*]. Whatever you may feel about it afterwards, Tishy, there's one thing you've got to hear—not maybe for you, but for *me*. I know how you feel about that business down there to-night—and I know how *I* feel about it.—I've brought her here—I made her come——

NETTIE. You near killed me, you big brute!

CARR. And she's going to tell you she lied to you—about why I was there—that I wasn't having supper with her, that I haven't seen her in months, that it was all a put-up job. That's why I brought her. [*To* NETTIE.] You lied about me, *didn't* you? Tell her!

TISHY. What does it matter—whether she lied or not—what difference does it make?

CARR. It matters the whole world to me.—Doesn't it matter anything to you?

NETTIE [*feeling somehow that she is mistress of the situation*]. You poor fool! You poor fool! She *knows* I lied. She knew it all the while. Do you think that's what's the matter with her? Not it! She's sore—sore because you ain't a virgin, or whatever you call it. She's sore because you traveled around with me—*me!* O if it had been one of her kind—that you'd had an "affair" with, it would have been different. But I'm spotty—and you're spotty—because you liked me once. That's the kind she is. And you want to know what else she is? Well, she's *jealous.* Ay-ugh! That's what it is—just *plain jealous!*—Sure, I lied! Why shouldn't I? I was in love with you. I wanted you.—And who wins? Me? No! You? No! 'Cause she won't take you back. Her? No—'cause she don't know enough to keep you.—And so everybody has a Happy New Year's.—I didn't come up here to cry and tell her I lied—not if you did about twist my arm off. I come up to see what she'd *do* when she saw us and heard your spiel—*Well,* I've *seen.* [*Turning to* TISHY.] And let me tell *you* a thing: You don't know much. No, you don't! Not as much as I do. And I got to tell you this too: If I was in your shoes to-night, and he wanted me, I wouldn't care what he'd done or what he was, I'd—— [*With a laugh to hide her emotion.*] I'd count my Lucky Stars, all of 'em!—*And that's all you'll ever get out of me!—Good-night!* [*She goes quickly and slams the door.*]

[TISHY *and* CARR *stand in silence during* NETTIE'S

outburst. CARR'S *thoughts are all for* TISHY, *and it is doubtful if he has given much heed to what* NETTIE *has said. His heart is full of pity and love, and distress for what has happened. What he wants now is forgiveness, to begin again, to take her in his arms, unworthy as they are.*] [TISHY *drops into a chair,* CARR *stands beside her pleadingly.*]

CARR. Tishy—I love you. [*No answer.*] Nobody'll ever love you like me, Tishy. [*No answer.*] Won't you take me back, Tishy?—You can't go back on me, Tishy—you can't! It's been, why, it's been heaven. You wouldn't shut me out now.—To-day after I left you, I didn't know what I was doing or saying—I just knew I'd gone to Heaven. I talked to myself in the streets and gave away all my money and it was summer and everything was singing: "Tishy—Tishy!—Tishy!"—But now, if I lose you—if I lose you—— [*No answer.*] Tishy—every man—when he meets his girl—he wants to come to her—white—only he can't—it breaks his heart maybe, but he can't—— [*No answer.*] A man doesn't live very straight, I guess, unless he's got some one to live straight *for*—Tishy—ever since that first day—when you said "good-morning"—I've been trying to scrub and polish and wipe out—and then to-night—happened.—Tishy—won't you take me back? [*No answer.*] You've got to let me help you, Tishy. You've got to. This money I was going to give to Leighton—you've got to take it, dear.—[*No answer.*] Tishy—you must—you must! [*A gesture of refusal from* TISHY.] Tishy—do you love me?

TISHY [*after a pause. Almost inaudibly*]. Yes.

CARR. Do you doubt my love?—Do you?—Tishy, if you doubt love, you'll doubt everything.

TISHY. I doubt everything now.

CARR. Do you know what a man is, Tishy? He's just what his love is, just that.

TISHY [*the words forced out of her*]. Just what his

love is? Yes, just that. And what do I know, how can I know, what yours will be ten—five—two years, even, from now? What did my mother know of my father's? What does any woman know? All she can do is to throw herself blindly, pitifully, into love—and take her chance, her little terrible chance—of keeping love somehow.

[*A silence during which* CARR *perceives how hopeless is his case.*]

CARR. Tishy—your father—has it been like that—always?

TISHY. Yes.

CARR. And Layton—did you leave him because——?

TISHY [*with growing intensity*]. Yes.

CARR. And now you're afraid—afraid to trust your love to me?

TISHY. *Yes.*

[*New Year's chimes ring out: "O God, Our Help in Ages Past." A fresh silence on the part of the two.*]

CARR [*hopelessly*]. Well—then—then—I guess—there—there isn't much more to say, is there? [*No answer.*] The little wreaths, Tishy—— [*with a gesture.*] [TISHY *chokes back a sob.*] That little money, Tishy—it wouldn't mean taking *me* with it.—I—I—Couldn't you take it? [*No answer.*] I'd—I'd make you so happy, dear—I'd try so hard to make you happy—— [*The New Year breaks with all its gay, wild noises outside.*] It's the New Year.—Well—I'll—I'll—— [*At the door.*] I don't blame you, dear—I—I—Good-by. [*He goes miserably.*]

[TISHY *stands motionless, in agony, and lets him go. The outer door closes. With her hands at her lips she stifles her sobs. She takes a step toward the door, then turns back. Then again to the door sobbing.*]

TISHY [*in furious protest over what she is enduring*]. Hell—Hell—Hell! [*The clamor outside increases and she stops her ears in anguish. The wreaths catch her*

eye. She runs to them, tears them from the doors and throwing open a window, flings them into the street below. The full blast of joy outside penetrates into the room maddeningly. Furiously she shuts the window.] Stop—stop—— O stop—stop——! [*She sinks to the floor and buries her head in a chair where she sobs with dry sobs, on the verge of a violent* crise de nerfs. *A key is heard to turn in the outer door and* Mrs. Healey *enters cautiously, and as cautiously puts her head into the room. She is in hat and coat.*]

Mrs. Healey [*joyfully*]. Miss Tishy—are ye there? [Tishy *stares at her unseeingly as she approaches.*]

Mrs. Healey. I was out with the bunch—in the street—for the fun—and I see the little light—and I says to meself, " 'Y God, that'll be Miss Tishy, God bless her—and I'll just go up and wish 'er a Happy New Year," I says, "and see if she got her little ginger-bread."

Tishy [*speaking with difficulty*]. Lizzie—got—got—what?

Mrs. Healey [*who sees now the girl's distress*]. 'Y God, the little ginger-bread I made for you, darlin'——

[Tishy *suddenly goes to pieces. She begins to laugh and cry hysterically.*]

Tishy. The little ginger-bread—the little ginger-bread—the little ging——

Mrs. Healey [*going to her and taking her in motherly arms*]. Miss Tishy, love—don't—darlin'—don't——

Tishy [*the tears come at last and she sobs her misery out on* Lizzie Healey's *breast*]. Lizzie—Lizzie Healey—I'm all alone—all alone——

Mrs. Healey [*half carrying her to a chair, where she sits and holds her in her protecting arms*]. There—Miss Tishy, love,—there—there—there, now——

Tishy [*as the clamor outside continues*]. O Lizzie—why won't they stop—why won't they stop?—What are they glad for? What is anyone glad for?

Mrs. Healey [*patiently*]. 'Y God, Miss Tishy, love,

they're glad because they're beginning again—and that there's something to begin.—And they're glad because they can forget all the divilishness they've got into, and start all over.—They don't know what's going to happen, and God help 'em, they don't want to. They're—*hoping* —that's all. [TISHY's *sobbing becomes less violent now. The crisis is over, the storm has begun to cease.*] Miss Tishy, love, there's a lad on the stairs out there—'Y God, I think his poor little heart is breaking— [TISHY *murmurs.*] Darlin', I don't know what you said to him, nor he to you, but if you love him, keep him, for there's nothing worth the keeping in this world, but love— [*With a large embrace,* MRS. HEALEY *rises, leaving* TISHY *kneeling by the chair.*] 'Y God, they're a poor lot, the men, all of 'em, and dirty, too—but the thing is, Darlin', to get one that cleans easy.

[MRS. HEALEY *moves softly out of the room, leaving* TISHY, *whose tears come now healingly and gently.* CARR *appears presently at the door, all his love and his honesty of soul in his pleading eyes.* TISHY *smiles through her tears. Her decision is made. She and* CARR *will set out together on their journey of life—not because he "cleans easy" but because of the love for him in her heart that will not let him go; because she knows that the man of her choosing* is *clean.—And so the play ends; the confusing, bewildering, torturing day is over; and this young man, this young woman, begin another, a truer experience.*]

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